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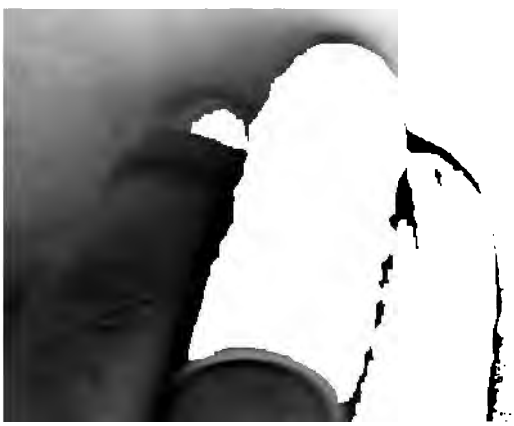

THE WORKS OF

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

IN TWENTY-FOUR VOLUMES

LIMITED EDITION

LIMITED, FOR SALE IN AMERICA, TO ONE THOUSAND NUMBERED AND REGISTERED SETS, OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER 346

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Death of the Duke de Guise. — Page 143.

THE WORKS OF *THÉOPHILE GAUTIER*

VOLUME SIX

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
PROFESSOR F. C. DE SUMICHRAST
Department of French, Harvard University

PORTRAITS OF THE DAY

With an Introduction by the Editor

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Portraits of the Day

PORTRAITS OF THE DAY

Introduction

THE present volume consists of a number of articles upon prose writers, poets, painters, actresses, and dancers, contributed by Gautier to various periodicals, reviews, and magazines — *le Figaro*, *la Presse*, *le Moniteur universel*, *le Journal Officiel*, *la Gazette de Paris*, *l'Artiste* — between the years 1837 and 1871. Many of them were originally of greater length, but were abridged when collected in book form and republished in 1874.

The variety of talents which Gautier criticises in these articles has had the advantage of bringing out the breadth and generosity of his judgments. Devoted to the worship and pursuit of art, he is intensely sympathetic towards all who cultivate it. No better recommendation to his favour could be had than love for poetry, painting, or sculpture. He can understand that

men should hold views differing widely from his own; that they should delight in subjects to which he is personally indifferent; that some should prefer line to colour, or colour to line; Greek art to Gothic, the East to the West, modern France to ancient Rome. He does not wish, he does not expect all to conform to his views, to have the same ideal. He has praise for Ingres as for Delacroix, for the spiritual-minded Lamartine as for the sensual Baudelaire. This, be it noted, without yielding up what he believes, what he is convinced is the only true mode of comprehending art and of reproducing beauty. He is broad-minded, kind-hearted, sympathetic; he is willing, nay, desirous to encourage. He seeks for merits rather than defects; he is anxious not to allow his prepossessions or his prejudices to interfere with his judgment; he is genuinely glad to discover reasons for praising artists whose work, on the whole, does not commend itself to him — but he will not sacrifice his essential beliefs, and if he cannot agree with all that he reads, hears, or sees, he will say so plainly. He marks the limitations of painter, poet, or sculptor; he indicates the dangerous tendencies, the false notions, the mistaken practice. Ingres has his share of demerit, as Delaroche has his

portion of reproach; and on the other hand Vernet is praised and Balzac lauded, even though the former is utterly modern and never roams in the fairy realms Gautier revels in, and the latter is absolutely unable to understand the subtle beauty and the melodious charm of verse.

Of course, Balzac was largely a Romanticist, while Gautier tended, not to realism exactly, but to a soberer mode of thought and to a firmer, cleaner, more accurate form of expression than the school of which he had been so illustrious a member, and which was being dethroned in its turn by the followers of Stendhal, Mérimée, and Balzac. Gautier appreciated the admirable work of the latter at a time when praise was but grudgingly conceded to one of the greatest masters of French letters. The realism of Balzac did not shock him; he saw in the stupendous "Comédie humaine" a form of that art which he himself loved so intensely and so faithfully.

In the same way he could and did appreciate so widely different a genius as Lamartine, who appealed to him in a very contrary manner, and Alfred de Vigny, whose reserve and aristocratic pride could not dampen the critic's enthusiasm for the truly noble works of the

soldier-poet. The labours of Gavarni, of Johannot, appeared to him worthy of laudation and notice; he conceived, and rightly, that his business as a critic was to draw attention to talent in danger of being forgotten, and to show what skill, what knowledge, what aptitude were needed to produce the bright illustrations which day after day gave pleasure to thousands of Frenchmen and foreigners.

In a word, the reading of these papers, on subjects so varied, on talents so diverse, has the effect of increasing admiration for Gautier himself. One learns to know better the generous heart that enjoyed bestowing praise, and the upright conscience that refused to compromise on questions of principle. And wonder grows as Gautier's own style changes and varies according to the topic; for it will be noted that the style deepens the impression made by the thoughts, and renders the work criticised more real, more vivid to the reader.

Finally, the volume in itself recalls a brilliant period in the past century. The names which recur in the following pages were household words in very truth; and now that the lapse of time has caused some to be partly forgotten — others, perhaps, to sink into oblivion

— it is pleasant, if a little melancholy, to have those figures brought back, those works recalled, those days revived, and the dazzling triumphs, the heroic struggles, the fierce contests evoked by so magic a pen as Théophile Gautier's.

BÉRANGER

THOUGH he still lived among us and was saluted with respectful glance when he was met walking, he was no longer a contemporary. In these days of rapid living, one does not need to live many years after withdrawing from the battle, in order to be able to estimate one's reputation from the point of view of later generations. Béranger had the satisfaction of knowing, long before going down to the grave, what posterity would think of him, and of passing away sure of his immortality, if indeed such an ambition had arisen within his heart. The men born at the beginning of the century, or somewhat earlier, formed the immediate public of Béranger. Those who belong to the younger generation know him better through having heard his songs sung by their fathers than from singing them themselves; they admire him somewhat on trust, and because of vague remembrances of their childhood. This circumstance is favourable to the poet's reputa-

tion; his claim is admitted, it is no longer discussed, and the general meaning of his work stands out more clearly.

Béranger consoled France in her humiliation; he preserved and revived noble remembrances, and in this respect he truly deserves to be called a national poet; his refrains flew on sonorous wings from lip to lip, and many know them who never read his work. No man was more popular, and in this he obtained what was refused to greater men of higher position than his own.

His talent consisted in enclosing within a narrow framework a clear, thoroughly defined, easily understood thought, and in expressing it in a simple form. He bore in mind the mass of the uneducated, whom French poets are too apt to forget, and who are punished for their disdain by a limited reputation. The uneducated, women, the common people rarely open a volume of verse; they fail to understand lyrical descriptions, complicated rhythms, and learned expressions. What they need especially is a legend, a short drama, an action, a feeling, something human which they are capable of grasping. Béranger knew how to compose. Even his poorest songs are planned, con-

nected; they have a definite aim; they begin, continue, and end logically; in a word, they have a framework like a vaudeville, a novel, a drama. They are not mere effusions, poetic caprices, or unconscious harmonies.

Having settled on his outline and strengthened it, as do certain painters, Béranger filled it in and coloured it, sometimes laboriously, with a firm, clean, accurate touch, without any great warmth of tone, and in that gray tint which is, as it were, the palette of French genius, inimical, in all the arts, to excess, violence, and boldness. Although he voluntarily restricted himself, and often with difficulty, to a *genre* which he raised to a higher level, and which, up to his time, was considered inferior, he ever cared, like a true artist, for rhythm and rime, without, however, making them dominant, as is the case with certain other poets. The rime sound in his work is always full and round, and almost always has its supporting letter. He has even often hit upon rare and happy rimes in this way which contain surprises and satisfy the ear. His verse, occasionally somewhat clumsily constructed, and, as it were, ill at ease through lack of space, — for the *chanson* does not admit of much more than six or eight couplets, the lines of which must not have more than ten

syllables, forming a verse in itself too long and inconveniently divided for singing, — is generally flowing and well constructed, with the cæsura well placed, and infinitely superior to contemporary verse until came the young Romanticist school which elaborated such marvellous rhythms. But although he was lovingly patient and careful in execution, polishing and repolishing in order to efface all traces of joints, he never looked upon that part of the work as anything but secondary. He subordinated everything to his original intention, to the end he aimed at and the effect he sought to produce. Like the dramatic author, who cares less for style than the writer properly so-called, he had, as may be guessed, to cut out many charming things which would have distracted the attention and proved tedious. Few poets have so much courage or common-sense.

Born one of the people, Béranger had all their instincts; he naturally understood and felt their joys, their griefs, their regrets, their hopes, and thus he was thoroughly modern. He did not look for his subjects to antiquity, which he was unacquainted with at first, and which he afterwards affected to ignore. Never having learned Latin, he ingeniously turned this pre-

text to account in order not to write a patchwork of Horace and Virgil. At a time when imitation was all the vogue, he thought for himself, if he did write more like other men, and as criticism did not then attach much importance to songs, he did not suffer from those violent attacks which other budding geniuses had to contend with.

France, as the Revolution of 1830 fully proved, always laid the blame for the disasters of 1815 at the door of the Restoration. The success of Béranger's political songs was therefore immense. He expressed with rare skill the general feeling, and sang aloud what every one whispered low; he spoke of the Man of Fate, of the tricolour, of the Old Sergeant, and besides, enabled the French to make fun of their conquerors, — a service which that brave, proud, and witty people never forgets; for it will put up with anything if it can turn its enemy into ridicule.

In one respect Béranger resembles Charlet, who in his line of art also wrought out the familiar epic of the Grand Army, and represented Napoleon such as the people had seen him, with his small hat and his gray riding-coat. The poet and the painter accomplished something which it is very difficult to manage in a

highly civilised country; they discovered legend in history, and they drew with numberless ineffaceable touches a silhouette which was at once recognisable.

These are doubtless the chief reasons of the great popularity which forever attached itself to Béranger's name; but they are not the only ones. His wit is really French, even Gallic, without any foreign mixture; that is to say, a tempered, playful, humourous wit, of easy morality, of Socratic good-fellowship, something between that of Montaigne and Rabelais, the latter of whom laughs more willingly than he weeps, and yet knows when to temper a smile with a tear. It is not exactly the poetic spirit, such as Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Alfred de Musset have revealed it to us; but lyricism is not part of the genius of our nation. Béranger pleases the greater number, outside of his political opinions, by his ingenious clearness, his somewhat bare sobriety, and his proverbial common-sense, which, so far as I am concerned, come too close to prose. I am willing that the Muse should walk, especially when she wears her pretty cothurns, but I prefer that she should fly away, even at the cost of disappearing in the clouds.

BÉRANGER

There is in Béranger's work a large number of types which he sketched in a few couplets, and which live forever with that vigorous life of art which is much more lasting than real life: the King of Yvetot, Roger Bontemps, the Marquis of Carabas, the Marchioness de Pretintaille, Mistress Grégoire, Frétillon, Lisette,—sparkling etchings, light sketches, pastels done with the tip of the finger, which are worth as much as the most finished painting. You feel that you have met these people as living beings, that you have spoken to them and that they have replied.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

BORN IN 1799 — DIED IN 1850

I

ABOUT the year 1835 I was living in two small rooms in the blind lane of the Doyenné, nearly on the spot where rises to-day the Pavilion Mollien. Although situated in the centre of Paris opposite the Tuileries, within a couple of steps of the Louvre, the place was wild and deserted, and it certainly took persistence to discover me there. Yet one morning I saw a young gentleman with high-bred manners, with a cordial, clever look, cross my threshold, and apologise for introducing himself. It was Jules Sandeau. He had come from Balzac to secure my services for the *Chronique de Paris*, a weekly newspaper, which some of my readers may remember, but which was not financially successful, as it deserved to be. Balzac, Sandeau told me, had read "Mademoiselle de Maupin," then recently published, and he had greatly admired the author's style. He therefore

much desired to secure my collaboration for the newspaper which he backed and managed. An appointment was made, and from that day began between us a friendship which death alone interrupted.

I mention this, not because it is flattering to me, but because it does honour to Balzac, who, famous already, sent for an obscure young writer who had just entered the literary field, and associated him in his work on a footing of perfect comradeship and equality. At this time, it is true, Balzac was not the author of the "Comédie humaine," but he had written, besides several tales, the "Physiologie du Mariage," the "Peau de Chagrin," "Louis Lambert," "Séraphita," "Eugénie Grandet," the "Histoire des Treize," the "Médecin de Campagne," and "Le Père Goriot," — that is to say, under ordinary circumstances, enough to make five or six men famous. His rising glory, increasing from month to month, already shone with all the splendour of the dawn; and certainly it needed great brilliancy to shine in a heaven where showed at once Lamartine, Victor Hugo, de Vigny, de Musset, Sainte-Beuve, Alexandre Dumas, Mérimée, George Sand, and so many others. But Balzac at no time of his life posed as a literary Grand Lama, and he was always a

kindly companion. He was proud, but was absolutely devoid of conceit.

At that time he lived at the other end of the Luxembourg, near the Observatory, in an unfrequented street called Cassini. On the garden wall which ran almost all the way down the side on which stood the house inhabited by Balzac, were to be read the words, "Absolute, Dealer in Bricks." This curious sign, which still exists, unless I am mistaken, struck him very greatly. It is possible that "La Recherche de l'Absolu," sprang from this. This fateful name probably suggested to the author Balthaser Claës in pursuit of his impossible dream.

When I saw him for the first time, Balzac, who was just one year older than the century, was about thirty-six, and his face was one of those that are never forgotten. In his presence one recalled Shakespeare's words about Cæsar, —

> "Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'"

My heart beat high, for I had never approached without trembling a master of thought, and all the speeches which I had prepared on the way remained unspoken, my only utterance being a stupid phrase,

something like "It is very pleasant to-day." Balzac noted my embarrassment, soon put me at my ease, and during breakfast I regained my coolness enough to examine him carefully.

He wore even then by way of a dressing-gown the cashmere or white-flannel gown belted in by a cord, in which he was painted somewhat later by Louis Boulanger. I do not know what fancy had led him to choose this costume, which he never gave up; perhaps in his eyes it was symbolical of the cloistered life to which his work condemned him, and like a true Benedictine novelist, he had taken the costume of the order. Whatever the reason may have been, the fact remains that the white gown became him uncommonly well. He boasted, as he showed me his clean sleeves, that he had never soiled their purity with the least drop of ink, "for," said he, "the true writer must be clean while at work." The collar of the gown, thrown back, showed his strong bull-neck, as round as a pillar, without apparent muscles, and of a satin-like whiteness which contrasted with the richer complexion of the face. At this time, Balzac, in the prime of his age, exhibited all the signs of robust health, which were not at all in accord with the

fashionable Romanticist pallor and greenness; his thorough-bred Touraine blood flushed his cheeks with a bright purple and gave a warm colour to his kindly, thick, sinuous lips, which smiled readily. A small moustache and a tuft accented the contours without concealing them. The nose, ending squarely, divided into two lobes, cut with well opened nostrils, had a strikingly original and peculiar appearance: so Balzac, when he was posing for his bust, recommended David d'Angers to take care of the nose,—"Take care of my nose; my nose is a whole world." His brow was beautiful, broad, noble, decidedly whiter than the rest of the face, with no other mark than a furrow perpendicular to the root of the nose. The bumps of locality stood out markedly above the brows. His abundant, long, black hair was brushed back like a lion's mane. As for his eyes, there never were any like them; they were filled with intense vitality, light, and magnetism. In spite of his nightly watches, the eyeballs were as pure, limpid, and bluish as those of a child or a maiden, and in them were set two black diamonds lighted at times with rich golden flashes. They were eyes fit to make eagles lower theirs, fit to read through walls and breasts, to still the maddened

wild beast, — the eyes of a king, of a seer, of a tamer.

Madame Émile de Girardin, in her novel entitled "La Canne de M. de Balzac," speaks of those brilliant eyes: "Tancred then perceived that the top of that club was studded with turquoises, set in a marvellously chased gold setting, and behind it he saw two great black eyes more brilliant than the gems themselves."

As soon as one met the glance of these extraordinary eyes, it became impossible to notice any triviality or irregularity in the other features.

The usual expression of his face was a sort of powerful hilarity, of Rabelaisian and monkish joy, and no doubt the gown helped to suggest the thought of Brother Jean des Entommeures, but broadened and elevated by a mind of the first order.

According to his habit, Balzac had risen at midnight and had worked up to the time of my arrival. His face nevertheless showed no fatigue, save a darker line under the eyes, and during the whole breakfast he was madly gay. Little by little the conversation turned to literature; he complained of the frightful difficulty of the French language. Style preoccupied him greatly, and he sincerely believed he did not possess the secret

of it. It is true that at that time he was generally charged with lacking style. The school of Hugo, in love with the sixteenth century and the Middle Ages, learned in cæsuras, rhythms, structures, periods, rich in words and trained to write good prose by a course in the gymnastics of verse, working besides in imitation of a master whose methods were assured, cared only for what was well written, that is, wrought out and coloured to excess, and, besides, considered the depicting of modern manners useless, low, and unlyrical. So Balzac, in spite of the reputation which he began to enjoy with the public, was not admitted among the gods of Romanticism, and he knew it. While his books were read eagerly, their readers did not consider their serious aspect, and even to his admirers he long remained "the most fertile of our romancers" and nothing else. That may surprise modern readers, but I can answer for the accuracy of my statement. Balzac therefore took infinite pains to acquire style, and in his anxiety to be correct, he consulted people who were immeasurably inferior to him. He had, he said, before signing any of his works, written about a hundred volumes under different pseudonyms, — Horace de Saint-Aubin, L. de Villerglé, etc., — in order to get his

hand in; and yet he did possess his own form, although he was not aware of it.

But let us return to the breakfast. While talking, Balzac played with his knife, and I noticed his hands, which were of exquisite beauty, — white, with well-shaped, plump fingers, and rosy, shining nails. He was rather proud of them, and smiled with pleasure when they were looked at; they gave him a feeling of high birth and aristocracy. Byron says in a note, with evident satisfaction, that Ali Pacha complimented him upon his small ears, and inferred therefrom that he was a man of birth. A similar remark about his hands would have flattered Balzac as much, and even more than praise of one of his books. He went so far as to feel a sort of prejudice against those whose hands were not shapely.

The meal was rather choice. A *pâté de foie gras* formed part of it, but this was a breach of his usual frugality, as he observed laughingly; and for this solemn occasion he had borrowed silverware from his publisher.

I withdrew, after having promised to write for the *Chronique de Paris*, in which appeared the "Tour en Belgique," "La Morte amoureuse," "La Chaîne

d'Or," and other literary productions. Charles de Bernard, also invited by Balzac, published in it "La Femme de quarante ans," "La Rose jaune," and a few tales which have appeared since then in book form. Balzac, as is well known, had invented Woman at Thirty; his imitator had added ten years to that already venerable age, and his heroine was none the less successful.

Before we proceed farther, let me stop and give a few details of Balzac's life before I became acquainted with him. My authorities are his sister, Madame de Surville, and himself.

Balzac was born in Tours on May 16, 1799, on Saint Honoré's day; hence his name, which sounded well and seemed of good omen. Little Honoré was not a wonderful child; he did not prematurely foretell that he would write the "Comédie humaine." He was a healthy, blooming boy, fond of play, with bright, gentle eyes, but in no wise different from others save when looked at attentively. At seven years of age, on leaving the day school in Tours, he was sent to the Collège de Vendôme which was under the management of the Oratorians, and where he was considered a very mediocre pupil.

Balzac's Birthplace in Tours.

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The first part of "Louis Lambert" contains interesting information concerning this portion of Balzac's life. Dividing his own individuality, he has represented himself as a former schoolmate of Louis Lambert, speaking sometimes in his own name and sometimes lending his own sentiments to that imaginary yet very real personage, which is a sort of objective representation of his own soul: —

"Situated in the centre of the town, on the small river Loir which flows at the foot of the buildings, the college forms a broad enclosure in which are contained the usual buildings of an establishment of this sort: a chapel, a theatre, a hospital, a bakery. This college, the most celebrated seat of learning in the central provinces, draws its students from them and the colonies. On account of the distance parents do not come very often to visit their children. Besides, the regulations forbid holidays out of school. Once they have entered, the students remain within the buildings until the end of their studies. With the sole exception of the walks taken outside of the walls under the charge of the Fathers, everything had been arranged to give to this establishment the advantages of conventual discipline. In my day the corrector was still a living remembrance, and the leathern ferule performed its dread work most creditably."

Thus does Balzac represent that formidable school, which left lasting remembrances in his memory. It

would be interesting to compare the tale called "William Wilson," in which Edgar Poe describes, with the mysterious enlargement of childhood, the old Elizabethan building in which his hero was brought up with a companion no less strange than Louis Lambert; but this is not the place to draw the parallel; I am satisfied with suggesting it.

Balzac suffered terribly in that college, where his dreamy nature was oppressed constantly by inflexible rules. He neglected to fulfil his duties, but, favoured by the tacit complicity of a tutor in mathematics, who was librarian and engaged on some transcendental work, he did not take his lesson, and carried off such books as he pleased. His whole time was spent in reading in secret. Before long, therefore, he was the best-punished pupil in the class. Impositions and keeping in soon took up his recreation hours. Punishment inspires in certain boys a sort of stoical feeling of revolt, and they exhibit towards their exasperated teachers the same disdainful impassibility as the captive savage warrior towards the enemies who torture him; neither imprisonment, deprivation of food, nor beatings can draw the least plaint from them. Then occur between the master and the pupil horrible contentions

unknown to the parents, in which the constancy of the martyr equals the skill of the torturer. Some nervous teachers cannot bear the look, full of hatred, contempt, and threat, with which a boy of eight or ten will dare them.

Let me bring together here a few characteristic details which, though related of Louis Lambert, really apply to Balzac: —

"Accustomed to the open air and the freedom of an education left to chance, caressed by the tender care of an old man who cherished him, accustomed to think in bright sunshine, it was very difficult for him to bow to the college regulations, to walk in file, to live between the four walls of a room in which eighty silent lads were seated on wooden benches, each before his own desk. His acuteness of feeling was exquisitely delicate, and he suffered in every part of his being from this life in common. The odours which fouled the air, mingling with the smell of a class-room always dirty and filled with the remains of our breakfasts and lunches, told upon his sense of smell, — that sense which, being more directly related than the others to the nervous system and the brain, is bound to cause by its impairment invisible harm to the organs of thought. Besides these causes of atmospheric corruption, there were in the study-rooms lockers in which each boy put his spoil: pigeons killed for feast-days, or food surreptitiously brought from the refectory. Finally, there was in each of the study-

rooms a huge stone on which reposed at all times two buckets full of water, in which we went every morning in turns to wash our faces and hands in the presence of a master. Cleansed once a day only, before we were awake, the rooms were always filthy. Then, in spite of the number of windows and the door, the air was constantly vitiated by the emanations from the sink, from the lockers, by the numerous industries of each pupil, to say nothing of our eighty bodies crowded together. This sort of *humus* mingling constantly with the mud which we brought in from the courtyards, formed a filth of unbearable odour. The privation of the pure and perfumed air of the country, in which he had lived until then, the change in his habits, the discipline, — everything saddened Lambert. With his head always resting upon his left hand and his arm leaning upon the desk, he passed the study-hours in looking at the foliage of the trees in the court or at the clouds in the sky. He seemed to be studying his lessons, but, noting his pen at rest or his page untouched, the teacher would cry to him, 'You are not working, Lambert.' "

To this vivid, accurate painting of the sufferings entailed by school life, let me add that other passage in which Balzac, speaking of his dual self under the double name of Pythagoras and the Poet, — the one borne by that half of himself which he has personified in Louis Lambert, the other by his confessed self, —

admirably explains why he passed for a dullard in the eyes of his teachers: —

"Our independence, our illicit occupations, our apparent idleness, the state of numbness in which we remained, our constant punishments, our dislike of tasks and impositions, gained for us the reputation of being cowardly and incorrigible children. Our masters despised us, and we suffered from very dreadful discredit among our comrades, from whom we concealed our forbidden studies through fear of their ridicule. This double contempt, which was unjust as far as the Fathers were concerned, was natural enough in our comrades. We could neither play ball, run, nor walk on stilts in times of amnesty, when by chance we obtained a moment's freedom; we shared none of the pleasures in vogue in the school; we were strangers to the enjoyments of our comrades. We remained alone, sadly seated under a tree in the yard. So the Poet and Pythagoras formed an exception, a life outside the ordinary life. The penetrating instinct, the delicate self-love of schoolboys, made them feel that these were loftier or lower minds than theirs; hence arose in some a hatred of our mute aristocracy, in others contempt for our uselessness. We were not conscious of this state of feelings, and it may be that I have only made it out now. So we lived exactly like two rats, in the corner of the room where were our desks, and where we had to stay both during hours of study and of play."

The result of the secret work, of the meditations which took up the time for study, was that famous

"Treatise on the Will" which is mentioned several times in the "Comédie humaine." Balzac always regretted the loss of that first work, which he has briefly summarised in "Louis Lambert." And he relates, with an emotion which time has not lessened, the confiscation of the box in which the precious manuscript was enclosed. Jealous comrades endeavoured to snatch the box from the two friends, who were defending it ardently.

"Suddenly attracted by the noise of the fight, Father Haugoult intervened abruptly and asked what the dispute was about. The terrible Haugoult ordered us to give him the box. Lambert handed him the key; he took out the papers, glanced at them, and then said as he confiscated them, 'So that is the nonsense for which you neglect your duty!' Great tears fell from Lambert's eyes, drawn from him as much by the consciousness of his wounded moral superiority as by the gratuitous insult and the treachery which had befallen us. Father Haugoult probably sold to a grocer of Vendôme the 'Treatise on the Will,' without knowing the importance of the scientific treasures, the still-born germs of which were lost in ignorant hands."

After this narration, he adds, —

"It was in memory of the catastrophe which happened to Louis' book that, in the work with which these studies begin,

I have used for a fictitious work the title really invented by Louis Lambert, and that I have given the name, Pauline, of a woman whom he loved to a young girl full of devotion."

And, indeed, on opening the "Peau de Chagrin," there is found in Raphael's confession the following sentences: —

"'You alone admired my 'Theory of the Will,' that long work in preparation for which I had studied Oriental languages, anatomy, and physiology; to which I devoted the greater part of my time; the work which, unless I am mistaken, will complete the labours of Mesmer, Lavater, Gall, and Bichat, and open a new road to human science. With it stops my beautiful life and that daily sacrifice, that continuous labour unknown to the world, the sole recompense of which lies perhaps in the work itself. Since I came to years of discretion until the day when I finished my 'Theory,' I observed, learned, wrote, read unceasingly, and my life was, as it were, one long imposition. An effeminate lover of Oriental idleness, attached to my dreams, sensually inclined, I have worked unceasingly, denying myself the enjoyments of Parisian life; a gourmand, I have been sober; although I love walking, and travelling by sea, although I longed to visit foreign countries, although I delight even now in making ducks and drakes like a child, I have remained constantly at my desk, pen in hand; fond of conversation, I have gone to listen silently to the professors in the public courses at the Library and the Museum;

I have slept on my solitary couch like a Benedictine monk, and yet woman was my only chimera, — a chimera which I caressed and which ever fled from me."

If Balzac regretted the "Treatise on the Will," he must have felt a good deal less the loss of his epic poem on the Incas, which began thus:

"O Inca, O unfortunate, unhappy king,"

an ill-timed inspiration which gained for him, as long as he remained at school, the nickname of poet. Balzac, it must be owned, never had the gift of poetry, or at least, of versification. His very complex thought was always rebellious to rhythm.

The result of this intense meditation, of these mental efforts, truly prodigious in a child of twelve or fourteen, was a strange illness, a nervous fever, a sort of state of coma, utterly unintelligible to the teachers, who were not aware of the secret reading and work of the young Honoré, apparently idle and stupid. No one in the school suspected his precocious excess of intelligence, or knew that in the school prison, to which he had himself condemned daily in order to be free, the supposedly idle scholar had absorbed a whole library of serious books far above his powers at that

age. Let me here introduce a few interesting passages about the power of reading attributed to Louis Lambert, that is, of course, Balzac : —

"In three years' time Louis Lambert had assimilated the substance of the books in his uncle's library which were worth reading. The absorption of ideas through reading had become in him a curious phenomenon. His eye took in seven or eight lines at a glance, and his mind caught the sense with a speed comparable to that of his glance. Often even a single word sufficed to enable him to draw out the meaning of a whole sentence. His memory was prodigious. He remembered with equal accuracy thoughts acquired by reading and thoughts suggested to him by reflection or conversation. He possessed every form of memory, — for places, names, words, things, faces. Not only could he recall objects at will, but he saw them in his mind lighted up and coloured as they were at the moment when he had perceived them. That power applied equally to the most elusive acts of the understanding. He remembered, to use his own expression, not only where lay thoughts in the book from which he had taken them, but also the state of his soul at distant times."

Balzac preserved that marvellous gift of his youth throughout his life, and increased it. It explains the extent of his work, which is as great as the labours of Hercules.

The frightened teachers wrote to Balzac's parents to

ordinary pupils. No enthusiastic usher said to him, *Tu Marcellus eris*, or *Sic itur ad astra*.

Having finished his school education, Balzac gave himself that second education which is the true one. He studied, perfected himself, attended the courses at the Sorbonne, and studied law while working in the office of a solicitor and notary. Although this was apparently a waste of time, since Balzac did not become a solicitor, a notary, or a judge, it was nevertheless of value to him, for it made him acquainted with legal people, and enabled him to write later, in a way to amaze professional men, what may be called the legal side of the "Comédie humaine."

Having passed his examinations, the great question of the career to be followed presented itself. His people wanted Balzac to become a notary, but the future great writer, who was conscious of his genius, though no one believed in it, refused most respectfully, although he had the opportunity to enter an office on most favourable conditions. His father gave him a couple of years to show what he could do, and as the family was returning to the provinces, Mme. Balzac installed Honoré in a garret, giving him an allowance scarcely sufficient for the barest needs, and

hoping that a taste of privations would make him wiser.

That attic was in the rue de Lesdiguières, near the Arsenal, the library of which offered its resources to the young student. No doubt, to pass from a home in which he enjoyed abundance and luxury to a wretched garret would be hard at any other time of life than twenty-one, which was Balzac's age; but if the dream of every child is to wear boots, that of every young man is to have a room, a room of his own, of which he has the key in his pocket, even if the room be only large enough for him to stand upright in the middle. A room is the virile toga, is independence, individuality, and love.

So here is Master Honoré, perched aloft, seated before his table, starting to write the masterpiece which was to justify his father's indulgence and to give the lie to the unfavourable predictions of his friends. It is a singular thing that Balzac began with a tragedy, with Cromwell for its subject. Just about that time Victor Hugo was completing his "Cromwell," the preface of which became the manifesto of the young dramatic school.

expression. As I listened to these people, I could adopt their life, I felt their clothes on my back, I walked in their shoes full of holes. Their desires, their needs, everything, passed into my soul, and my soul passed into theirs; it was the dream of a man wide-awake. I got hot with them against the foreman who tyrannised over them, or against the bad-paying client who made them return several days without settling up. To abandon my own habits, to become another self by the intoxication of moral faculties, to play the game out, — such was my enjoyment. To what do I owe this gift, this second sight? Is it one of those qualities the abuse of which would lead to madness? I have never inquired into the source of this power; I possess it and use it, that is all."

I have transcribed these lines, doubly interesting because they illumine a little-known side of Balzac's life, and exhibit in him the consciousness of that powerful intuitive faculty without which the completion of his work would have been impossible. Balzac, like Vishnu, the Indian god, possessed the gift of avatar, that is, of incarnating himself in different bodies and of living as long as he pleased in them. Only, the number of Vishnu's avatars is fixed at ten; the avatars of Balzac are innumerable, and besides he could produce them at will. Strange as it may seem to us in this nineteenth century of ours, Balzac was a seer; his gift of observa-

tion, his physiological perspicuity, his literary genius do not suffice to explain the infinite variety of the two or three thousand types which play a more or less important part in the "Comédie humaine." He did not copy them, he lived them in his mind, he put on their dress, he assumed their habits, he entered their surroundings, he was themselves as long as necessary. Hence these consistent, logical beings which never contradict themselves, which are endowed with such a deep, genuine life, which — to make use of one of his expressions — compete with the official records of men's lives. Real red blood flows in their veins, instead of the ink which ordinary authors introduce into their creations. But, on the other hand, Balzac possessed that faculty in regard to the present only. He could transport himself in thought into the marquis, the financier, the *bourgeois*, the man of the people, the courtesan, but the shades of the past did not answer his call. He never was able, like Goethe, to evoke Fair Helen from the depths of antiquity and make her dwell within Faust's Gothic manor. With two or three exceptions, his whole work is modern. He assimilated the living; he could not resuscitate the dead. History itself tempted him but little, as may

be seen by a paragraph in the Introduction to the "Comédie humaine: —"

"As one reads the dry and dull nomenclatures of facts called histories, who is there that does not perceive that writers in Egypt, in Persia, in Greece, at Rome, have always forgotten to give us the history of manners? The passage of Petronius about the private life of the Romans irritates rather than satisfies our curiosity."

The blank left by the historians of vanished societies, Balzac proposed to fill up as far as ours was concerned; and every one knows how faithfully he carried out the programme which he had laid out for himself:

"Society was to be the historian, I the secretary merely. By drawing up the inventory of vices and virtues, by collecting the principal facts of passions, by depicting characters, selecting the chief features in society, composing types by combining the traits of several homogeneous characters, I might perhaps manage to write a history forgotten by so many historians, — that of manners. With much patience and courage I might compose about France in the nineteenth century the book which we all regret, which Rome, Venice, Tyre, Memphis, Persia, India, have unfortunately not left us concerning their civilisations, and which, in imitation of the Abbé Barthélemy, the courageous and patient Monteil tried to write about the Middle Ages, but in a not very attractive form."

Let us return to the garret of the rue de Lesdiguières. Balzac had not yet thought out the plan of the work which was to immortalise him. He was still seeking his way uneasily, laboriously, with much effort, trying everything, succeeding in nothing; yet he already possessed that obstinacy of work to which Minerva, however rebellious she may prove, is bound to yield to some day or another. He sketched comic operas, drew up plans of dramas and novels, of which Mme. de Surville has preserved the titles for us: "Stella," "Coqsigrue," "Les deux Philosophes," to say nothing of the terrible "Cromwell," the lines of which cost him so much trouble, and were not much better than the line with which began his epic poem on the Incas.

Imagine young Honoré, his legs wrapped up in a patched carrick, the upper portion of his body protected by an old shawl of his mother's, on his head a sort of Dante-like cap, of which Mme. Balzac alone possessed the pattern, his coffee-pot on his left, his ink-bottle on his right, ploughing away with bowed brow, like an ox at the plough, the stony and untouched field of thought in which later he cut such fruitful furrows. His lamp shone like a star in the darkened house, the snow fell

silently on the tiles, the wind blew through the door and window, "like Julou in his flute, but less agreeably."

If any belated passer-by had looked up to that obstinately flickering little light, he would certainly not have suspected that it was the dawn of one of the greatest glories of our age. Here is a sketch of the place, transposed, it is true, but very accurate, drawn by the author himself in the "Peau de Chagrin," the work in which he has put so much of himself: —

"A room which looked out upon the yards of the neighbouring houses, from the windows of which stuck out long poles covered with clothes. Nothing could be more hideous than that garret with its dirty, yellow walls, that smelled of wretchedness and called for a scholar. The roof sloped down evenly, and the disjointed tiles allowed the sky to be seen. There was room enough for a table, a few chairs, and under the gable of the roof I could put my piano. I lived in that aerial sepulchre for nearly three years, working night and day, without stop or stay, with so much pleasure that study seemed to me the most beautiful thing, the successful solution of human life. The calm and silence which a scholar needs have a sweetness and an intoxication comparable to that of love. Study lends a sort of magic to all that surrounds us. The mean desk on which I wrote and the brown stuff which covered it, my piano, my bed, my armchair, the quaint design of the paper on the wall, my furniture, all these things became

living and humble friends of mine, the silent helpers of my future. How many a time have I not put my soul into them as I gazed upon them? As my eyes wandered along the broken moulding, I would come upon new ideas, upon a proof of my system, or words which I thought happily rendered inexpressible ideas."

In the same passage he alludes to his work: —

"I had undertaken an important piece of work, a play, which was very shortly to bring me renown, wealth, and entrance into that world in which I proposed to satisfy myself in the practice of the royal rights of a man of genius. You all took that masterpiece for the first mistake of a young fellow who had just left college, a child's folly. Your jokes killed fruitful lines which have never again reappeared."

We recognise here the unfortunate "Cromwell," which, having been read to the family and its friends in solemn assembly, proved a complete failure. Honoré appealed from that sentence to an arbiter whom he accepted as competent, a kind old man, formerly a professor in the Polytechnic School. The verdict was that the author had better try anything at all except literature. What a loss for letters, what a blank in the human mind, if the young man had bowed to the experience of his elder and taken his advice! Yet it certainly was very sound, for there

was not the least spark of genius, or even talent, visible in that rhetorical tragedy.

Happily, Balzac, under the pseudonym of Louis Lambert, had not written in vain the "Theory of the Will" at the College of Vendôme. He accepted the verdict, but merely as regarded tragedy. He understood that he must not hope to walk in the footsteps of Corneille and Racine, whom he then admired on trust, for never were there geniuses more different from his own. The novel offered him a more convenient mould, and he wrote at that time a great number of books which he did not sign and which he always disavowed. The Balzac whom we know and admire was still in limbo, and was vainly striving to emerge. Those who considered him fit to be a clerk only were apparently right, but perhaps even that resource would have failed him, for his fine hand must have already been spoiled by the writing of the crumpled, scratched, re-written, almost hieroglyphic drafts of the writer struggling with his idea and utterly careless of the form of his letters.

So nothing had come from that rigorous claustration, from that hermit life in the Thebaïd of which Raphael gives us the budget: —

"Three sous' worth of bread, two sous' worth of milk, and three sous' worth of pork meat kept me from starvation, and maintained my brain in a state of singular lucidity. My lodging cost me three sous a day; I burned three sous' worth of oil a night; I made my own room and wore flannel shirts in order not to spend more than two sous a day at the laundry. I warmed my room with coal, the price of which, divided by the number of days in the year, never amounted to more than two sous a day. I had clothes, linen, and shoes enough to last me three years; I made up my mind to dress only when I went to certain public lectures and to the libraries. My total expenses amounted to eighteen sous, — that left me two sous for unforeseen matters. I do not remember, during that long period of work, crossing the Pont des Arts or purchasing any water."

No doubt Raphael somewhat exaggerates the economy, but Balzac's letters to his sister show that the novel is not very far from the truth. The old woman who figures under the title of Iris the Messenger, and who was seventy, could not be a very active housekeeper, so we find Balzac writing: —

"The news from my household is disastrous. Work interferes with cleanliness. That rascal Ego is more and more neglectful of himself. He goes out every three or four days for purchases, goes to the nearest and least well stocked shops in the neighbourhood; the others are too far, and my

lad at least saves shoe leather. So that your brother, who is destined to become so famous, is fed exactly like a great man, that is, he is starving.

"Another misfortune is that the coffee makes dreadful stains on the floor. It takes a great deal of water to repair the damage. Now as water does not come up to my *heavenly* garret, — it only comes down to it in rain storms, — I shall have to think, after purchasing the piano, of setting up a hydraulic machine, if my coffee continues to leak while master and servant are gaping."

Elsewhere, keeping up the joke, he scolds the lazy Ego, who leaves cobwebs hanging from the ceiling, flocks of dirt blowing under the bed, and a blinding dust covering the windows. In another letter he says, "I have eaten two melons. I shall make up for this by eating nuts and dry bread."

One of the few enjoyments he allowed himself was to go to the Botanical Garden or to the cemetery of Père-Lachaise. From the summit of the cemetery hill he overlooked Paris, as did de Rastignac at the funeral of old Goriot. His eye ranged over the sea of slates and tiles which concealed so much luxury, so much misery, so many intrigues, so many passions. Like a young eagle, he gazed upon his prey, but he had yet neither wings nor beak nor talons, although

his eye could look straight at the sun. He used to say, as he looked at the tombs: "There are no fine epitaphs save these, — La Fontaine, Massenet, Molière, — a single name which tells everything and which makes you think."

Those words were inspired by a vague, prophetic presentiment, which, alas! was realised too soon. On the slope of the hill, upon a tombstone below a bronze bust modelled after the marble bust by David, the single word "Balzac" tells everything and makes the solitary stroller reflect.

The dietetic regimen recommended by Raphael might favour lucidity of the brain, but certainly it was very bad for a young man accustomed to a comfortable family life. Fifteen months spent under these intellectual leads, more gloomy, unquestionably, than the leads of Venice, had turned the fresh-coloured youth from Tours, with his satiny, bright cheeks, into a pale, yellow Parisian skeleton, almost unrecognisable. Balzac returned to his father's home, where the fatted calf was killed for the return of that most unprodigal son.

I shall pass rapidly over that part of his life during which he endeavoured to secure independence by spec-

ulating in the publishing business; the lack of capital alone preventing his being successful. His attempt got him into debt, mortgaged his future, and, in spite of the earnest but perhaps somewhat dilatory help of his family, weighed him down with that rock of Sisyphus which he pushed so often up to the edge of the plateau, and which ever fell back crushingly upon his Atlas-like shoulders, that bore the whole world besides. His debts, which he considered it a sacred duty to pay, for they represented the fortune of people who were dear to him, proved to be Necessity with her knotted whip, with her hand full of bronze nails, that worried him night and day without stay, and made him look upon an hour's rest or distraction as a theft. It weighed painfully upon his whole life, and often made it unintelligible to any one not in the secret. And now these indispensable biographical details have been given, let me come to my direct and personal impressions of Balzac.

Balzac, with his mighty brain, Balzac, who was so penetrating a physiologist, so close an observer, Balzac, who had so much intuition, did not possess the literary gift. In him there was a great gulf fixed between thought and its expression. In his earlier days he

despaired of ever crossing it. He threw into it, without ever filling it up, volume after volume, night-watch after night-watch, essay after essay; a whole library full of disowned books went into it. A man of less determined will would have been discouraged over and over again, but happily Balzac had an unshakable trust in his genius, as yet unrecognised. He had resolved to become a great man, and he became one by incessantly projecting that fluid more powerful than electricity, which he has so subtly analysed in "Louis Lambert." In contradistinction to the writers of the Romanticist School, who were all noted for amazing completeness and fertility of execution, and who brought forth their fruits almost at the same time as their flowers, the bloom being, as it were, almost involuntary with them, Balzac, who equalled them all as a genius, could not find a way to express himself, or rather found it only after infinite trouble. Hugo said in one of his prefaces, with that Castilian pride of his, "I do not possess the art of putting a beauty in the place of a defect, and I correct myself in another work." But Balzac covered with erasures as many as ten different proofs, and when he saw me send back to the *Chronique de Paris* the proof of an

article written straight off on the corner of a table without any more than typographical corrections, he could not believe, however pleased with it he might otherwise be, that I had put all my talent into it. "If you had worked it over two or three times more, it would have been better," he would say.

Setting himself up as an example, he would preach to me the strangest literary hygiene. I ought to shut myself up for two or three years, drink water, and eat lupins as did Protogenes; go to bed at six in the evening, rise at midnight, and work until morning; spend the day in revising, extending, cutting down, perfecting, polishing the work of the night before, correcting the proofs, taking notes, making the necessary studies, and especially live in the most absolutely chaste manner. He insisted at great length on this last recommendation, — a harsh one for a young man of twenty-four or twenty-five. In his opinion, real chastity developed the natural powers in the highest degree, and gave to those who practised it unsuspected power. I objected timidly that the greatest geniuses had not forbidden themselves love or passion, or even pleasure, and I would cite illustrious names. Balzac would shake his head and answer, "They would have

done far greater things if they had kept away from women."

The single concession that he would allow, and regretfully at that, was a half-hour's interview with the beloved person each year. He allowed letters, — "they formed the style."

He promised, if I would subject myself to this regimen, to make of me, with the natural talent which he was good enough to accord me, a writer of the first rank. It will readily be seen by my work that I have not followed that very wise plan of study.

It must not be imagined that Balzac was joking when laying down a rule which Trappists and Carthusians would have thought hard; he was truly convinced, and spoke with such eloquence that I several times conscientiously tried this method of acquiring genius. I rose several times at midnight, and after having drunk the inspiring coffee, brewed in accordance with the formula, I sat down before my table, on which sleep very soon bowed my head. The "Morte amoureuse," published in the *Chronique de Paris*, was my single nocturnal work.

At about this time Balzac had written for a review "Facino Cane," the story of a Venetian noble who,

imprisoned in the dungeons of the Ducal Palace, had fallen by accident into the secret treasury of the Republic, a large portion of which he had carried off with the assistance of a jailer he had bribed. Facino Cane, who had become blind, and who played the clarinet under the vulgar name of Father Canet, had preserved in spite of his infirmity a second sight, so far as gold was concerned. He could divine its existence through walls and vaults, and he offered the author at a wedding in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine to guide him, if he would pay his travelling expenses, to that vast mass of riches of which the fall of the Venetian Republic had caused the location to be forgotten. Balzac, as I have said, lived in his characters, and at that moment he was Facino Cane himself, bar blindness, for never did more brilliant eyes flash in a human face. So he was dreaming only of barrels of gold, of heaps of diamonds and carbuncles, and by means of magnetism, with which he had long been familiar, he made somnambulists seek out the place of buried and lost treasure. He claimed to have thus learned, in the most accurate manner, the spot where, near the mountain of Pointe-à-Pitre, Toussaint l'Ouverture had buried his gold with the help of negroes who

were at once shot down. Poe's "Gold Bug" does not come up in cleverness of induction, in clearness of plan, in the divination of details, to the feverish recital which he made to me of the expedition to be attempted in order to become possessors of this treasure, which was far richer than that buried by Kidd at the foot of the tulip tree with the death's head.

I beg the reader not to laugh at me if I humbly confess that I soon shared Balzac's belief. What brain could have resisted his amazing speech? Jules Sandeau also was soon seduced, and as two sure friends, two devoted, robust comrades were needed to dig at night on the spot indicated by the somnambulists, Balzac was kind enough to give each of us a fourth share of that prodigious wealth. One half was to be his, however, by right, as the discoverer and director of the undertaking.

We were to purchase pickaxes, crowbars, and shovels, to embark them secretly on board a ship, to reach the place indicated by different ways so as not to excite suspicion, and having managed the business, to ship our riches on a barque chartered beforehand. In a word, it was a perfect novel, which would have been wonderful if Balzac had only written it instead

of speaking it. Needless to say, we did not dig up Toussaint l'Ouverture's treasure, for we had not the money to pay for our passage, there being scarcely enough between the three of us to buy the pickaxes. The dream of sudden wealth, due to some strange and marvellous cause, often haunted Balzac's brain. A few years before (in 1833) he had made a trip to Sardinia to examine the refuse of the silver mines abandoned by the Romans, which, having been treated by imperfect processes, must still, in his opinion, contain a great deal of metal. The idea was sound, and, imprudently imparted by him, made another man's fortune.

III

I HAVE related the anecdote of Toussaint l'Ouverture's buried treasure, not for the pleasure of relating an amusing story, but because it is connected with the master-thought of Balzac, — money. Assuredly no one was less mercenary than the author of the "Comédie humaine," but his genius made him foresee the mighty part which this metallic hero was to play in art, — a hero more interesting to modern society than the Grandisons, the Des Grieux, the Oswalds, the

Werthers, the Malek-Adhels, the Renés, Laras, Waverleys, Quentin Durwards, and others. Up to this time novelists had been content to depict a single passion, that of love, but love in an ideal sphere, beyond the necessities and the small wants of life. The characters in these wholly psychological tales neither ate, drank, nor lodged anywhere; they had no account with their tailor; they lived, moved, and had their being in an environment as abstract as that of tragedy. If they proposed to travel, they took no passport, but put a few handfuls of diamonds into their pocket and paid in that currency postilions who never failed to founder their horses at every relay. Mansions of vague architecture received them at the end of their travel, and they wrote with their blood interminable letters, dated from the Northern Tower, to their loves. The heroines, no less immaterial, resembled Angelica Kauffman's *aqua-tintas*. They wore great straw hats, hair curled in English fashion, and long dresses of white muslin bound at the waist with a blue scarf.

His deep feeling for reality made Balzac understand that the modern life he desired to depict was dominated by one great fact, — money; and in the "Peau de Chagrin" he was courageous enough to represent a

lover anxious not only to know whether he has touched the heart of the woman he loves, but also whether he will have money enough to pay the cab in which he is taking her home. This is perhaps the greatest boldness which any man has allowed himself in literature, and it would alone suffice to make Balzac immortal. The amazement it created was profound, and purists grew wroth at this infraction of the laws of the novel; but all the young fellows who, going to spend an evening with a lady, wore white gloves which had been cleaned with rubber, had traversed Paris like dancers on the tips of their shoes and feared a splash of mud more than a pistol shot, sympathised, because they had felt it, with the anguish of Valentin, and were doubly interested in the hat which he cannot replace and which he preserves with solicitous care. At times of greatest want, the discovery of one of the five-franc pieces slipped between the papers in the drawer by the modest sympathy of Pauline produced the effect of the most romantic, startling situation on the stage, or of the intervention of a Peri in Arabian tales. Who is there that has not discovered in a day of distress, forgotten in his trousers pocket or in a vest, a noble crown-piece which turned up exactly at the right time

and saved one from the misfortune which a youth most dreads, — the inability, when with the woman he loves, to pay for a carriage, a bouquet, a footstool, a theatre programme, to tip the box-opener, or some such trifle?

Balzac, besides, excels in depicting youth, poor as it almost always is, engaged in its first struggle with life, a prey to the temptations of pleasure and luxury, but bearing up under great poverty, thanks to its high hopes. Valentin, Rastignac, Bianchon, d'Arthez, Lucien de Rubempré, Lousteau, have all eaten the hard bread of poverty, — a strengthening food for a robust stomach, but indigestible for weak ones. Balzac does not lodge all those handsome young fellows without a sou in conventional garrets hung with chintz, with windows festooned with sweet peas and looking out upon gardens; he does not make them eat "simple dishes prepared by the hands of nature;" he does not clothe them in plain but convenient garments. He puts them into a common boarding-house, such as Mother Vauquer's, or sticks them under the arch of a roof, makes them lean on the greasy tables of the meanest eating-houses, clothes them in black coats with whitened seams, and is not afraid to send them to

the pawn-shop if they still possess — which is not usual, — their father's watch.

O Corinne, you who on Cape Miseno let your snow-white arm hang upon your ivory lyre while the son of Albion, draped in a splendid new cloak and wearing boots beautifully polished, contemplates and listens to you in an elegant attitude, — what would you, Corinne, have said of such heroes? Yet they possess a quality which Oswald lacks, — they live a life so real that one feels as if one had met them many a time. No wonder, then, that Pauline, Delphine de Nucingen, the Princess de Cadignan, Madame de Bargeton, Coralie, Esther are madly in love with them.

At the time when the first novels signed by Balzac appeared, people did not long for — or rather, feverishly covet — gold as they do now. California was yet to be discovered; there scarcely existed more than a few miles of railways; the future development of this form of transportation was not foreseen, and railways were looked upon as something like slides which were to take the place of the switchbacks, that had fallen into desuetude. The public was, so to speak, ignorant of what is now called business, and bankers alone speculated on 'Change. The turning over of capital,

the stream of gold, the calculations, the arithmetic, the importance given to money in works which were even then accepted as merely romantic fictions, and not as serious paintings of life, greatly astounded subscribers to circulating libraries, and critics summed up the amounts expended or staked by the author. The millions of Father Grandet gave rise to arithmetical discussions, and serious people, moved by the enormous totals, doubted the financial capacity of Balzac, — a very remarkable capacity, nevertheless, as was later recognised. Stendhal said, with a sort of disdainful conceit of style, "Before writing I always read three or four pages of the Civil Code to get my tone." Balzac, who understood money so well, also discovered poems and dramas in the Code. The "Contrat de Mariage," in which he contrasts, under the characters of Matthias and Solonnet, the old and the new style of lawyer, is as interesting as the most exciting comedy of cloak and sword. The story of the bankruptcy in the "Grandeur et Décadence de César Birotteau," is as absorbing as the narrative of the fall of an empire; the fight between the castle and the peasant's hut in the "Paysans," is as full of alternations as the siege of Troy. Balzac knows how to impart life to an estate,

to a house, to an inheritance, to capital; he makes them into heroes and heroines, whose adventures are read with feverish anxiety.

These elements thus newly introduced into the novel did not at first please readers. The philosophical analysis, the detailed descriptions of characters, the accounts so minute that they seemed meant for posterity, were looked upon as regrettably diffuse, and usually were skipped by the reader eager to reach the end of the story. Later on it was seen that the author's main object was not to weave more or less complicated plots, but to depict the whole of society from top to bottom, the members of it, and their abodes; then the immense variety of his types was admired. Was it not Alexandre Dumas who said: "Shakespeare, the man who, next to God, has been the greatest creator"? This would be far more correct applied to Balzac, for never indeed did so many living creatures emerge from a human brain.

At this time (1836) Balzac had already conceived the plan of his "Comédie humaine" and was fully conscious of his own genius. He skilfully connected the works which had already appeared with his general idea, and found a place for them in the categories

which he made up systematically. Some purely fanciful tales are unquestionably not in full harmony with it, in spite of the joinings which he made subsequently, but these details are lost in the vastness of the mass, like architectural remains in a different style in a splendid edifice.

I have said that Balzac worked with difficulty, and, determined to do well, would throw back a dozen times into the crucible the metal which had not accurately filled the mould. Like Bernard Palissy, he would have burned his furniture, the floor, and even the beams of his house, to keep up the fire of his furnace so that the experiment should not fail. The most pressing necessity never drove him to allow the publication of a book on which he had not expended his utmost efforts, and he repeatedly gave proof of admirable literary conscientiousness. His corrections, so numerous that they almost amounted to different editions of the same idea, were charged against him by the publishers, whose profits were absorbed by them, and his remuneration, often small considering the value of the work and the labour it had cost him, was diminished by so much. The promised payments were not always made when due, and in order to meet

what he laughingly called his floating debt, Balzac displayed prodigious resources of mind and an activity which would have completely filled the life of an ordinary man. But when, seated before his table in his monk's robe in the silence of the night, he found himself with white leaves on which fell the light of his seven candles concentrated by a green shade, when he took up the pen, he forgot everything, and then began a struggle more terrible than that of Jacob with the angel, the struggle between the form and the idea. In these nightly battles from which he emerged every morning worn but victorious, when the cold hearth on which the fire had gone out cooled the atmosphere of the room, his head smoked and from his body rose a steam as visible as that which rises from the bodies of horses in winter. Sometimes a single phrase took up the whole night. It was written, re-written, twisted, kneaded, hammered, lengthened, shortened, put in a hundred different ways, and, strange to say, the necessary, the absolute form came only after all approximate forms had been exhausted. No doubt the metal flowed often in a fuller, richer way, but there are very few pages in Balzac's works which remain as he first wrote them.

His way of working was this: When he had a long time borne and lived a subject within himself, he jotted on a few pages in a rapid, broken, erratic, almost hieroglyphic hand a sort of *scenario*, which he sent to the printer, who returned the pages in the shape of posters, — that is, of single galleys in the centre of large sheets. He read carefully those posters, which already gave to his work in embryo that impersonal character which manuscript does not possess, and he applied to this first sketch the powerful critical faculty he possessed, judging his own writing as if the work were another man's. He had something to work on then, he approved or disapproved, he maintained or he corrected, but mostly he added. Lines, starting from the beginning, the middle or the end of sentences, went off to the margin on the right, the left, the top and the bottom, leading to developments, to intercalations, to inserts, to epithets, to adverbs. After a few hours' work, the page looked like a final burst of fireworks drawn by a child. From the original text sprang rockets of style which exploded in every direction. Then there were simple crosses, and crosses recrossed, like those of heraldry, stars, suns, Arabic or Roman numerals, Greek or French letters, all

imaginable signs of reference which mingled with the lines. Strips of paper pasted on with wafers or stuck on with pins, were added to margins that proved insufficient, and rayed with lines, in fine writing to save room,—lines which were themselves full of corrections, for one was scarcely made than it was again improved upon. The printed poster disappeared almost altogether in the centre of this cabalistic-looking scrawl, which compositors passed to each other, none of them being willing to work longer than one hour at a time at Balzac's manuscript. The next day the printer sent back the posters, which, the corrections having been made, were already twice as numerous as before. Balzac set to work again, still developing, adding a trait, a detail, a picture, some remark on manners, a characteristic expression, a striking sentence, compelling the form to render the idea more closely, getting ever closer to the thought in his mind, choosing, as does a painter, the final line out of three or four contours. Often after he had finished that terrific work, with that intensity of attention of which he alone was capable, he would perceive that he had failed to express his thought, that an episode was too prominent, that a figure which he

intended to be secondary in the general effect stood out too prominently, and with one stroke of the pen he would courageously destroy the result of four or five nights of labour. He was really heroic under such circumstances.

Six, seven, sometimes ten proofs came back, deleted, worked over, before Balzac's desire for perfection was satisfied. I have seen at the Jardies, on the shelves of a library composed exclusively of his own works, every different proof of the same book, from the first draft to the final printed book, bound in a separate volume. A comparison of the thought of Balzac in its different states would be a very interesting study, and would teach valuable lessons in literature. Near these volumes a sinister-looking book bound in black morocco, without tooling or gilding, drew my attention. "Take it," said Balzac; "it is an unpublished work which is of some value." The title was "Melancholy Accounts." The book contained a list of debts, dates when notes fell due, the amounts given tradesmen, and all the frightful papers which the Stamp Office legalises. This volume, through a sort of quizzical contrast, was placed side by side with the "Contes drôlatiques," "of which it is not the continua-

tion," laughingly added the author of the "Comédie humaine."

In spite of his laborious method of work, Balzac produced a great deal, thanks to his superhuman will, which was served by his athletic temperament and his monkish mode of life. For two or three months at a time, when he had some important work under way, he wrote for sixteen to eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. He gave to the body six hours only of a heavy, feverish, convulsive sleep, brought on by the torpor of digestion after a hastily eaten meal. At such times he disappeared completely, his best friends lost track of him; but he soon emerged from under ground, waving a masterpiece above his head, laughing with that hearty laugh of his, applauding himself with perfect artlessness, and bestowing on himself praise which I am bound to say he never sought of any one. No author cared less than he did about the reviews and notices of his books. He allowed his reputation to grow up of itself without helping it on, and he never paid court to newspaper men. Besides, that would have taken up his time. He delivered his copy, drew his money, and hastened to distribute it to creditors who often waited for him in the yard of

the newspaper office, as did, for instance, the builder of the Jardies.

Sometimes he would come to my rooms in the morning, breathless, exhausted, dazed by the fresh air, like Vulcan escaping from his forge. He would throw himself on a divan. His long night-watches had made him hungry, and he would crush sardines in butter, making a sort of pomade which recalled to him the Tours *rillettes*, and which he spread upon slices of bread. That was his favourite dish. No sooner had he dined than he would fall asleep, asking me to awaken him in an hour's time. Disregarding his request, I would respect his well-earned sleep and take care that no noise was made in the house. But when Balzac awoke and saw the twilight spreading its grey shadows throughout the heavens, he would spring up and overwhelm me with insults, calling me traitor, robber, and murderer; I had made him lose ten thousand francs, for if I had awakened him, he might have thought of a novel which would have brought in that amount, to say nothing of the profits from subsequent editions. I was the cause of the gravest catastrophes and of unmentionable disorders; I had made him miss appointments with bankers, publishers, and duchesses;

he would not be prepared now to pay his notes when they came due; that fatal sleep would cost him millions. But I was already accustomed to the prodigious arithmetical sums which Balzac, starting from the smallest amounts, carried on to the most startling totals, and I was easily consoled on seeing his fine colour reappear upon his rested face.

Balzac at that time was living at Chaillot, rue des Batailles, in a house from which there was a lovely prospect, — the Seine, the Champ de Mars, the dome of the Invalides, a large portion of Paris, and in the distance the hills of Meudon. He had furnished the house rather luxuriously, for he knew that in Paris a man of talent who is poor is not much believed in, and that the appearance of wealth often brings the reality. It was at this time that he indulged in elegance and dandyism, that he wore his famous blue coat with buttons of massive gold, that he carried the enormous stick with its turquoise top, that he went to the Bouffes and the Opera, and appeared more frequently in society, where his brilliant high spirits made him always most welcome, — a frequentation which, besides, he turned to account, for in the course of his visits he came upon more than one model. It was not easy to

enter his house, which was better guarded than ever was the Garden of the Hesperides. Two or three pass-words were necessary, and Balzac often changed them for fear they should become known. I can remember some. You had to say to the porter, "The plum season has come," and he allowed you to cross the threshold. To the servant who answered the bell you had to whisper, "I am bringing Belgian lace." If you could assure the valet that "Madame Bertrand was in good health," you were at last introduced. This nonsense greatly delighted Balzac. It may have been necessary to keep away bores and other visitors still more disagreeable. In the "Fille aux yeux d'or," there is a description of the drawing-room in the house of the rue des Batailles. It is scrupulously accurate, and the reader may be interested in an account of the lion's den by the lion himself. Not a single detail has been added or omitted: —

"One half of the boudoir formed a softly graceful circular line which contrasted with the perfectly square other half, in the centre of which stood a mantelpiece in white marble and gold. The entrance was through a side door concealed by a rich portière of tapestry, opposite a window. The horse-shoe end was furnished with a real Turkish divan, — that is, a

mattress thrown on the ground, but a mattress as broad as a bed; a divan fifty feet in length, of white cashmere ornamented with puffs of black and crimson silk arranged in lozenges. The back of this huge bed rose several inches above the cushions, which made it still richer by the tastefulness of their ornamentation. The boudoir was hung with a red stuff, over which was laid Indian muslin fluted like Corinthian columns, the fluting alternately concave and convex, and held in at the top and bottom by a band of crimson-coloured stuff on which were drawn black arabesques. Under the muslin the crimson turned to rose-colour, an amorous colour, repeated by the window curtains, which were of Indian muslin lined with rose taffeta and adorned with crimson and black fringes. Six silver-gilt bracket candelabra, each bearing a wax taper, were fixed to the hangings at equal distances to give light to the divan. The ceiling, from the centre of which hung a dulled silver-gilt chandelier, was of sparkling whiteness. The cornice was gilded. The carpet resembled an Oriental shawl, the pattern of which it reproduced, and it recalled the poetry of the Persian land where it had been wrought by the hands of slaves. The furniture was covered with white cashmere, relieved by black and crimson ornaments. The clock and candelabra were of white marble. The only table in the room was covered with a cashmere shawl; elegant flower-stands held roses of all kinds, and white or red flowers."

I may add that on the table stood a superb inkstand in gold and malachite, no doubt the gift of some admirer.

It was with childish satisfaction that Balzac showed me this boudoir, made out of a square drawing-room, and necessarily leaving empty places in the corners of the rounded half. When I had sufficiently admired the coquettish splendour of the room, the luxury of which would not strike one so much to-day, Balzac opened a secret door and led me into a dark passage behind the hemicycle. At one of the corners was a narrow iron bedstead; in the other there was a table "with all necessary materials for writing," as M. Scribe says in his stage directions. It was there that Balzac took refuge in order to work safe from any surprise and any investigation.

The partition was covered with several thicknesses of cloth and paper so as to cut off any sound from one side or the other. In order to be certain that none could reach him from the drawing-room, Balzac asked me to go back into the room and shout as loud as I could. He could still hear me a little, so more gray paper had to be pasted on to completely deaden the sound. All these mysterious ways greatly puzzled me, and I asked the reason of them. Balzac gave me a reason which Stendhal would have approved, but which modern prudery prevents my repeating. The fact is

that he was already weaving in his mind the scene between Henry de Marsay and Paquita, and he was anxious to know whether the cries of the victim in a drawing-room thus fitted could reach the ears of the other inhabitants of the house.

He entertained me in that same room at a splendid dinner, for which he lighted with his own hand all the tapers in the silver-gilt candelabra, the chandelier, and the candelabra on the mantelpiece. The guests were the Marquis de Belloy and Louis Boulanger the painter. Although very sober and abstemious usually, Balzac did not hesitate from time to time to indulge in a little good cheer. He ate with jovial gormandism which gave one an appetite, and he drank like Pantagruel. Four bottles of the white wine of Vouvray, one of the headiest known, had absolutely no effect upon his strong head, and merely gave more sparkle to his wit. What rare stories he told us! Rabelais, Beroalde de Verville, Eutrapel, Poggio, Straparola, the Queen of Navarre, and all the doctors of the gay science would have acknowledged in him a disciple and a master.

IV

One of Balzac's dreams was of a heroic, devoted friendship, — two souls, two courages, two minds united in the same will. Pierre and Jaffier in Otway's "Venice Preserved" struck him very much, and he refers to them repeatedly. The "Histoire des Treize" is merely the development of this idea, — a powerful unit composed of multiple beings all working blindly for an end agreed upon by all. Every one knows what striking, mysterious, terrible effects he drew from it in "Ferragus," "La Duchesse de Langeais," "La Fille aux yeux d'or;" but real life and mental life were never wholly separated by Balzac as they are by other authors, and his creations followed him beyond his study. He wished to form an association after the fashion of that which united Ferragus, Montriveau, Ronquerolles, and other comrades; only, he did not propose to emulate their bold enterprises. A certain number of friends were to help each other on every occasion and to strive to the best of their ability to help on the success of the one selected, with, of course, the understanding that the latter should in his turn work for the others. Deeply infatuated with his project,

Balzac recruited a few friends whom he brought together only after taking as many precautions as if he were organising a political society or a Carbonari *vente*. The quite needless mystery greatly tickled him, and he set about carrying out his idea in the most serious fashion possible. When he had selected his adepts, he called them together and informed them of the purpose of the society. It is unnecessary to say that every one at once fell in with his views and that the statutes were adopted with enthusiastic unanimity. No one possessed to such a degree as Balzac the power of dazzling, exciting, and intoxicating the coolest heads, the most solid intellects. He had an overflowing, tumultuous, compelling eloquence which carried you off, strive as you might to resist. It was impossible to make any objections; he immediately overwhelmed you with such a deluge of words that you had perforce to keep silence. Besides, he had a reply always ready, and cast on you such lightning-like glances, so brilliant, so full of magnetism, that he filled you with his own desire. The association, which numbered among its members G. de C., Léon Gozlan, Louis Desnoyers, Jules Sandeau, Merle, who was called Handsome Merle, myself, and a few others whom it is unnecessary to name, was called

"The Red Horse." Why "The Red Horse," you may say, rather than the Golden Lion or the Cross of Malta? Because the first meeting of the initiated took place at a restaurant on the Quai de l'Entrepôt, at the end of the Tournelle Bridge. The sign, a red horse, suggested to Balzac the quaint, unintelligible, cabalistic name of his society. When any project had to be framed, when any steps had to be agreed upon, Balzac, who had been unanimously elected Grand Master of the order, sent by one of the initiated to each *horse* (that was the slang name borne by the members among themselves), a letter on which was drawn a little red steed, with these words, "Stable, on such a day and at such a place." The place was occasionally changed, lest curiosity or suspicion should be aroused. In society, although we all were acquainted with each other and had long been so for the most part, we were bound to avoid speaking to each other, or at least, to speak very coldly, so as to remove any thought of connivance. Often in a drawing-room, Balzac would pretend that he was meeting me for the first time, and with winks and grimaces like those of actors in their asides, he would draw my attention to his cleverness and seem to say to me, "See how cleverly I am playing the game!"

What did "The Red Horse" propose to do? To change the government, to institute a new religion, to found a school of philosophy, to master men, or seduce women? Much less than that. We were to get hold of the papers, to manage the theatres, to get elected to the Academy, to be made companions or knights of ever so many orders, and to end our days modestly as peers of France, ministers, and millionaires. It was very easy to do, according to Balzac; all that was needed was to work in harmony, and our modest ambition proved the moderation of our character. That devil of a man had such a powerful sense of vision that he described to each of us, down to the smallest details, the splendid and glorious life which our association would secure for us. As we listened to him, we already saw ourselves leaning, in some fine mansion, on white marble mantelpieces, red ribbons around our necks, stars of brilliants on our breasts, receiving affably political, artistic, and literary celebrities, all of them amazed at our mysterious and rapid fortune. The future did not exist for Balzac; with him everything was in the present. When he evoked the future, he drew it out of its haze and made it tangible. His ideas were so vivid that they became real to him. If he

spoke of a dinner, he ate it while he described it; of a carriage, he felt its soft cushions and its springs; perfect comfort, deep satisfaction were then depicted on his features, although possibly he was actually hungry and walking over a sharp pavement with worn-out shoes.

The whole company was to push, praise, laud, in articles, in notices, in conversation, any member who had just published a book or had a play performed. Whoever had shown hostility to one of the "horses" was to draw down on himself the kicks of the whole stable. "The Red Horse" was unforgiving. The culprit became a mark for hostile criticisms, wearisome iterations, pin-pricks, sarcasms, and other means of driving a man to despair well known to the smaller fry of the press.

I smile as, after so many years, I betray the innocent secret of that literary free-masonry which had no other result than a few notices of a book the success of which did not call for such help; but at the time I took the matter seriously; I imagined we were the Thirteen themselves in very deed, and I was surprised to find that obstacles still existed, — but this world is so badly made. I used to put on an important, mys-

terious air as I elbowed other men, poor dullards who had no suspicion of my power. After four or five meetings "The Red Horse" ceased to live, most of the "horses" not having the wherewithal to pay for their oats at the symbolical manger, and the association which was to appropriate everything was dissolved because the members often lacked five francs, the price of the meal. So each one of us plunged back by himself into the battle of life, and fought his own fight; and that is why Balzac never belonged to the Academy, and died a knight of the Legion of Honour only.

Yet the idea was a sound one, for Balzac, as he himself says of Nucingen, could not possibly have a poor idea. Others who have succeeded turned it to account without shrouding it in the same romanesque fancifulness.

Thrown by one chimera, Balzac immediately climbed on another and set off for another trip into Fairyland, with that childish artlessness which was so naturally united in him to the deepest sagacity and the craftiest mind.

How many a strange project did he unfold to me, how many a quaint paradox did he maintain, and always with the same good faith. Sometimes he

maintained that one ought to live at a cost of not more than nine sous a day; at others, he insisted that a hundred thousand francs was the least with which one could be comfortable. Once, having been asked by me to figure up the items, he replied to my objection that there were still thirty thousand francs unspent, with: "Well, that will do for the butter and radishes. What kind of a house is that which does not spend thirty thousand francs in radishes and butter?" I wish I could paint the glance of sovereign contempt which he let fall on me as he uttered that triumphant reply. His glance meant: "Decidedly, Théo is but a poor fool, a skinned rat, a mean mind. He cannot understand life on a great scale, and has never eaten anything but Breton salt butter."

The public became much interested in the Jardies when Balzac purchased the place with the honourable intention of securing a property for his mother. Every one who travelled by the railway which passes by Ville-d'Avray looked curiously at the little house, half cottage, half chalet, which rose upon the clay slope.

The ground, according to Balzac, was the best possible. Formerly, he maintained, a certain famous wine

was grown there, and the grapes, thanks to an unparalleled exposure, cooked themselves ripe, like the Tokay grapes on the Bohemian hills. It is true that the sun had ample opportunity to ripen the grapes on this spot, for there was but a single tree. Balzac endeavoured to enclose his property with walls, which became famous by their perseveringly falling down, or sliding in a heap down the too steep slope; and he dreamed of raising on this land, favoured by heaven, the most fabulous and the most exotic crops. Here naturally comes in the story of the pine-apples; a story which has been so often repeated that I should not tell it again but that I am able to add to it a genuinely characteristic trait. This was the plan: One hundred thousand pine-apple plants were to be set in the garden of the Jardies, transformed into hot-houses, which would require but little heating, thanks to the very sunny exposure. The pine-apples were to be sold at five francs, instead of the usual price of twenty-five francs,—that is, they would bring in five hundred thousand francs. From this sum was to be deducted one hundred thousand francs for the expenses of cultivation, glazing, and heating; there remained, therefore, four hundred thousand francs net profit, which would give the happy

owner a splendid income, — "without writing a word of copy," he would add. That was nothing: Balzac framed a thousand plans of the sort. But the beauty of it was that we hunted together on the Boulevard Montmartre for a shop in which to sell the yet unplanted pine-apples. The shop was to be painted black with gold lines, and to have a sign in huge letters, "Jardies Pine-apples."

As far as Balzac was concerned, the hundred thousand pine-apples were already shooting up their aigrettes of dentellated leaves above their great golden, lozenged cones under vast glass roofs; he could see them; he enjoyed the high temperature of the hot-house, he breathed in its tropical perfume with dilated and delighted nostrils. And when, having returned to his room, he gazed, leaning on the window, at the snow which was silently falling upon the bare slopes, even then he scarcely lost his illusion. Yet he did take my advice not to hire the shop until the following year, so as to avoid useless expense.

I am writing down my remembrances as they come back to me, without trying to connect what must necessarily be unconnected. Besides, as Boileau used to say, transitions are the great difficulty in poetry, —

and in articles, I might add; but modern journalists have neither so much conscience nor especially so much leisure as the Regent of Parnassus.

Madame de Girardin professed for Balzac a lively admiration, for which he was grateful and in return for which he paid her frequent visits, although he was rightly very chary of his time and his working-hours. Never did any woman possess to so great a degree as Delphine — as we allowed ourselves to call her familiarly among ourselves — the gift of stirring up the minds of her guests. In her company one was always in good spirits, and every one left the room delighted with himself. There was no pebble so hard that she could not make a spark flash from it, and with Balzac, as you will easily imagine, it was not necessary to strike the steel long. He sparkled at once and took fire. Balzac was not exactly what is called a conversationalist, quick in repartee, throwing a clever, decisive remark into a discussion, changing the subject as the talk goes, touching lightly on everything and never going beyond a half-smile. He had an irresistible rush, eloquence, and fire of conversation, and as everybody kept silence to listen to him — in his case, to the general satisfaction — the conversation rapidly

turned into a monologue. His starting-point was soon forgotten and he passed from anecdotes to philosophical reflections, from observations of manners to descriptions of places. As he spoke, his face flushed, his eyes became peculiarly brilliant, his voice assumed different inflections, and sometimes he would burst out laughing, amused by the buffoon apparitions which he saw before he described them. In this way he used to announce, by a sort of trumpet-blare, the arrival of his caricatures and his jokes, and the listeners soon shared his hilarity. Although we were then in the days of dreamers, long-haired like weeping willows, of weepers in skiffs, and of Byronian, disillusioned youth, Balzac possessed that robust and powerful gaiety which Rabelais is supposed to have shared, and which Molière exhibited in his plays only. The broad laugh upon his sensual lips was that of a kindly god whom the sight of the human marionettes amuses, and who does not worry over anything because he understands everything and sees both sides at once. Neither the troubles attendant on his position, so often precarious, nor money worries, nor the fatigue of excessive work, nor his claustration for study, nor his renunciation of all the pleasures of life, nor even

sickness itself could strike down the Herculean joviality which was, in my opinion, one of the most striking characteristics of Balzac. He laughed as he smashed hydras, he was happy as he tore lions asunder, and carried as if it were a hare the boar of Erymanthus on his mighty, muscular shoulders. At the least provocation his gaiety broke out and made his great breast heave. Sometimes, indeed, it would shock a refined person, but however much one might endeavour to remain serious, it had perforce to be shared. And yet you are not to suppose that Balzac sought to amuse the gallery; he merely yielded to a sort of internal intoxication, and painted with rapid strokes, with intense comicality and incomparable talent for buffoonery, the strange phantasmagoria which whirled around in the *camera obscura* of his brain. I cannot better compare the impressions produced by innumerable conversations of his than to those one experiences on looking over the strange drawings of the "Songes drôlatiques" by Master Alcofribas Nasier, which represent monstrous creatures made up of the most dissimilar elements. Some have by way of a head a pair of bellows, the air-hole of which represents the eye; others have the stem of an alembic for a nose;

others again walk upon castors instead of feet; others are round like the paunch of a stewpan and have a cover for a head; but intense life fills these imaginary beings, and in their grimacing faces one recognises the vices, follies, and passions of men. Some, although absurd, almost stop you dead, as would portraits; you could put a name to them.

When you listened to Balzac, a whole carnival of extravagant and real *fantocci* pranced before your eyes, wearing on their shoulders a variegated sentence, waving long sleeves of epithets, noisily blowing their noses with an adverb, slapping around with a bat of antitheses, pulling you by the skirt of your coat and telling your secrets in your ear in a nasal, disguised voice, pirouetting and whirling in the midst of a sparkle of lights and spangles. It was bewildering, and very soon you felt, like Wagner after the speech of Mephistopheles, a mill-stone whirling in your brain.

He was not always in such very high spirits, and then one of his favourite amusements was to imitate the German jargon of Nucingen or Schmuke, or else to talk *rama* like the clients of the boarding-house of Madame Vauquer (*née* Conflans). At the time when

he wrote "Un Début dans la vie," on a sketch by Madame de Surville, he was hunting for transposed proverbs, to be spoken by Mistigris, the painter's apprentice, to whom later, thinking him witty, he assigned a fine position in the "Comédie humaine," under the name of the landscape painter Léon de Lora. Here are some of the proverbs: "Profit is not without honour," "A bird in the hand gathers no moss," "Accessions will happen in the best regulated families," "One touch of nature makes the whole world blush," "Flirtation is the thief of time," "Poets are born not maids," etc. To come upon a good one put him in the best of tempers, and he would skip with the grace of an elephant about the furniture all round the drawing room. On her part, Madame de Girardin was hunting for witticisms for the famous "Lady with the Seven little Chairs" of the *Courrier de Paris*. My help was sometimes required in this matter, and if a stranger had entered and had seen the beautiful Delphine drawing her white fingers through her golden curls with an air of deep reverie; Balzac sunk in a great upholstered armchair in which M. de Girardin usually slept, his closed fists rammed into his trousers pockets, his waistcoat rolled up above

his stomach, swinging one leg monotonously and rhythmically, and testifying by the contracted muscles of his face to extraordinary mental effort; me crouched between two cushions on the divan like an opium eater in an ecstasy, — the stranger could certainly never have suspected what we were meditating upon so deeply. He would have taken it for granted that Balzac was thinking of a new Mme. Firmiani, Madame de Girardin of a new part for Mademoiselle Rachel, and I of some sonnet. And he would have been very far astray. As for puns, Balzac, though his great ambition was to make them, had, after conscientious efforts, to acknowledge his notorious incapacity in this respect, and to keep to the travestied proverbs which preceded the approximate puns which the common-sense school made fashionable. What delightful evenings that will never return! We were far then from foreseeing that the tall, splendid woman, formed like an antique statue, that the robust, quick man who united in himself the vigour of the boar and the bull, half Hercules, half satyr, built to outlast a century, would so soon go to sleep the last sleep, the one at Montmartre, the other at Père-Lachaise, and that of the three I should remain alone to preserve

those remembrances already distant and so near being forgotten.

Like his father, who died by accident when he was more than eighty years old, Balzac believed himself destined to live long. He often talked over his projects for the future with me. He was going to finish the "Comédie humaine," to write the "Theory of the Gait," a "Monograph on Virtue," some fifty dramas, gain more wealth, marry and have two children,—"but not more; two children look well," he would say, "on the back seat of a carriage." All this would necessarily take up time, and I pointed out that when he had finished these jobs he would be about eighty. "Eighty!" he cried, "that is the very flower of age."

One day when we were dining together at M. Émile de Girardin's, he told us an anecdote about his father, by way of showing how vigorous was the stock from which he sprang. M. de Balzac senior, who had been put into an attorney's office, took his meals, according to the custom of the day, at the master's table with the other clerks. Partridges were served. The attorney's wife, who was watching the new-comer out of the corner of her eye, said to him, "M. Balzac, can you

carve?" "Yes, Madam," replied the young fellow, blushing up to his ears, and he bravely seized the carving knife and fork. Being totally ignorant of culinary anatomy, he divided the partridge into four portions, but so vigorously that he split the dish, cut the cloth, and drove the edge of the knife into the table. It was not clever, but it exhibited his strength. The attorney's wife smiled, and from that day out Balzac, the young clerk, was treated very sweetly in that house.

The story, as I tell it, seems cold, but it should be told with Balzac's pantomime as he imitated upon his own plate the paternal exploit, with the air of terror and resolve which he assumed, the fashion with which he seized his knife after having turned up his sleeves, and with which he drove his fork into an imaginary partridge, — Neptune driving away marine monsters never handled his trident with a more vigorous fist. And how terribly he bore down upon it! His cheeks grew purple, his eyes jutted from his head. And when the operation was over, what a glance of righteous satisfaction trying to conceal itself under modesty, he would cast upon the guests!

The truth is, Balzac had in him the making of a great actor. He had a full, sonorous voice, of rich

and powerful timbre, which he could moderate and make very soft at need, and he read admirably well, — a talent which most actors lack. Whatever he told, he acted it with intonations, grimaces, and gestures which in my opinion no comedian ever surpassed.

I find in "Marguerite" by Madame de Girardin, this souvenir of Balzac. It is one of the characters in the book who speaks: —

"He said that Balzac had dined with him the night before, and had been more brilliant and more sparkling than ever. He delighted us with the story of his trip to Austria. What fire! what dash! what power of imitation! He was marvellous. His fashion of paying the postilions is an invention which a novelist of genius alone could come upon. 'I was greatly bothered at every relay,' he said. 'How could I pay? I did not know a word of German, I did not know the currency of the country, — it was very difficult. This is what I imagined. I had a bag filled with small silver coins, kreutzers, etc. On reaching a relay the postilion came to the carriage window. I looked him straight in the eye and I put into his hand one kreutzer, two kreutzers, then three, then four, and so on until I caught him smiling. The moment he smiled, I knew that I had given him one kreutzer too much, so I promptly took back one, and my man was paid.'"

At the Jardies he read to me "Mercadet," the original "Mercadet," far fuller, more complex and

varied than the play when skilfully and tactfully arranged for the Gymnase by d'Ennery. Balzac, who, like Tieck, read on without indicating acts, scenes, or names, made use of a different and perfectly recognisable voice for each personage. The organs with which he endowed the different sorts of creditors were of the most startling comicality. Some were hoarse, some were honeyed, some spoke fast, some slowly, some threateningly, some plaintively. The crowd of them yelped, miauled, growled, grumbled, howled in every possible and impossible tone. First, Debt sang a solo, which soon an innumerable chorus took up. Creditors came out from everywhere: from behind the stove, from below the bed, from the drawers of the bureau; they poured from the chimney, they filtered in through the keyhole; others climbed in by the window like lovers; some sprang from the bottom of a trunk like Jacks-in-the-box, others came through the walls as out of an English trap; and they became a crowd, a roaring multitude, an invasion, a regular flood-tide. In vain Mercadet shook them off; others took their places, and as far as one could see there was to be made out a dark host of creditors on the march, arriving like huge termites to devour their prey. I do

not know if the play was better in that form, but never did any performance produce such an effect upon me.

Balzac, while he was reading "Mercadet," was half lying on the long divan in the Jardies drawing-room, for he had sprained his ankle, having slipped, like his walls, upon the clay soil of his property. A little hair, coming through the stuff, stuck him in the leg and annoyed him. "The chintz is too thin," he said, "the hay comes through. You will have to put thicker stuff underneath," he added as he pulled at the annoying hair.

François, the Caleb of our Ravenswood, would not suffer the splendours of the manor to be laughed at. He corrected his master and said "hair." "Then that scoundrel of an upholsterer has swindled me," replied Balzac. "They are all alike, — I had ordered the thing stuffed with hay. Damn the man!"

The splendours of the Jardies were mostly imaginary. All Balzac's friends can remember having seen written in charcoal upon the walls, bare or covered with gray paper, "Rosewood wainscoting, — tapestry from the Gobelins, — Venetian mirror, — painting by Raphael." Gérard de Nerval had already decorated an apartment in this fashion, and so we were not sur-

prised at it. As for Balzac, he literally believed himself to be dwelling amid gold, marble, and silks. But if he never finished the Jardies, and if his chimeras made people laugh, at least he built himself an eternal dwelling, a monument more durable than brass, a vast city peopled with his creations and gilded by the beams of his glory.

V

By a peculiarity of temperament which he shared in common with several of the most poetic writers of our age, such as Chateaubriand, Madame de Staël, George Sand, Mérimée, Janin, Balzac possessed neither the gift nor the love of verse, however great the efforts he made to attain to it. On this point his excellent judgment, so deep and so sagacious, was at fault; he admired somewhat at haphazard, and, so to speak, as public notoriety led him to do. I do not think, although he professed great respect for Victor Hugo, that he ever felt very much the lyrical qualities of the poet, whose prose, at once sculptural and coloured, amazed him. He, so laborious, nevertheless, and who turned a phrase over as many times as rimesters may put back an Alexandrine on the anvil, thought that to labour at metre was puerile, fastidious, and useless. He

would have willingly recompensed with a bushel of peas those who succeeded in making an idea pass through the narrow ring of rhythm, as Alexander rewarded the Greek who was skilled in throwing from a distance bullets through a ring. Verse, with its fixed, clean form, its elliptical speech unfitted for multiple detail, seemed to him an obstacle invented purposely, a superfluous difficulty, a mnemonic method adapted to the use of primitive days. In this respect he believed very much as did Stendhal: "Can the fact that a work was written while the author was hopping on one foot, add to the pleasure the work gives?"

The Romanticist school contained within itself a few adepts, partisans of absolute truth, who rejected verse as unnatural. If Talma said, "I do not want fine verses," Beyle said, "I do not want verse at all." That was at bottom Balzac's feeling, although in order to appear broad-minded, comprehensive, and universal, he sometimes pretended in society to admire poetry, just as ordinary people affect to care enthusiastically for music which bores them enormously. He was always surprised at seeing me write verse, and delight in doing it. "That is not copy," he would say, and any esteem which he felt for me I owed to my prose.

All the writers, then young, who formed part of the literary movement represented by Hugo, used, like the master, the lyre or the pen. Alfred de Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Musset, spoke indifferently the tongue of gods and the tongue of men; I also — if I may name myself after such glorious names, — possessed that double faculty from the start. It is always easy for poets to descend to prose; the bird may walk when it chooses, but the lion cannot fly. Born prose writers never rise to poetry, however poetical they may be otherwise; the gift of rhythmic speech is a peculiar one, and a man may possess it without being necessarily a great genius, while it is often refused to superior minds. Among the proudest of those who apparently disdain it, more than one is unconsciously annoyed at not possessing it.

Among the two or three thousand personages of the "Comédie humaine" there are two poets, Canalis in "Modeste Mignon," and Lucien de Rubempré in "Splendeurs et Misères des courtisanes." Balzac has represented both in no very favourable way. Canalis is cold, sterile, small, narrow-minded; he is a clever arranger of words, a maker of imitation jewels, who sets paste in silver-gilt and makes necklaces of imita-

tion pearls. His volumes, with numerous leads, broad margins, and wide intervals, contain nothing but melodious nothingness, monotonous music fit only to make schoolgirls sleep or dream. Balzac, who usually espouses warmly the interests of his characters, seems to take a secret pleasure in turning Canalis into ridicule and placing him in embarrassing positions. He riddles his vanity with infinite irony and sarcasm, and winds up by taking from him Modeste Mignon and her great wealth, to give her to Ernest de la Brière. This ending, which is contrary to the commencement of the story, sparkles with veiled malice and sly mockery. Balzac seems to be personally delighted with the clever trick which he has played on Canalis. He thus takes his revenge for the angels, the sylphs, the lakes, the swans, the willows, the skiffs, the stars, and the lyres which the poet has made such abundant use of.

If in Canalis we have the sham poet who saves up his slight inspiration and dams it up in order that it may flow, foam, and sound for a few moments so as to simulate a cascade; the clever man who makes all his literary successes, laboriously prepared, serve his political ambition; the positive man, who is fond of money, degrees, pensions, and honours, in spite of his elegiac

attitudes and his posing as an angel who regrets heaven; on the other hand Lucien de Rubempré exhibits to us the idle, frivolous, careless, fantastic, womanishly nervous poet, who is incapable of persistent effort, who has no moral strength, who lives maintained by actresses and courtesans, a marionette the strings of which are pulled at pleasure by the terrible Vautrin, who hides himself under the pseudonym of Carlos Herrera. It is true that in spite of his vices Lucien is seductive; Balzac has bestowed wit, beauty, youth, and elegance upon him. Women adore him, but he ends by hanging himself in prison. Balzac did all he could to bring to a successful issue the marriage of Clotilde de Grandlieu with the author of the "Marguerites," but unfortunately the exigencies of morality were in the way; and what would the Faubourg Saint-Germain have said of the "Comédie humaine" if the pupil of Jacques Collin the convict had married a duke's daughter. Since we are speaking of the author of the "Marguerites," let me note here a bit of information which may interest bibliophiles. The few sonnets which Lucien de Rubempré shows as a sample of his volume of verse to the publisher Dauriat are not by Balzac, for he wrote no verse and asked his friends

for any which he happened to need. The sonnet on the Marguerite is by Madame de Girardin, the sonnet on the Camellia by Lassailly, and that on the Tulip by myself. "Modeste Mignon" also contains some verses, but I do not know who wrote them.

As I said when speaking of "Mercadet," Balzac read admirably, and he was good enough one day to read to me some of my own verses. He recited among others "La Fontaine du Cimetière." Like all prose writers, he read for the sake of the sense only, and tried to conceal the rhythm which poets, when they recite their verses aloud, accentuate, on the contrary, in a fashion unbearable to every one else, but which delights them. We had on this point a long discussion, which merely ended, as is always the case, in each of us being more set in his own private opinion.

The great literary man of the "Comédie humaine" is Daniel d'Arthez, a serious writer, hard-working, long buried, before he makes his reputation, in deep studies of philosophy, history, and linguistics. Balzac dreaded facility, and he did not believe that a work rapidly written could be good. For this reason he entertained singular repugnance towards newspaper writing, and he considered time and talent given up to it

as wasted; nor did he fancy newspaper writers much more, and although himself so great a critic, he despised criticism. The very unflattering portraits which he has drawn of Étienne Lousteau, Nathan, Vernisset, Androche Finot, fairly represent his real opinion of the press. Émile Blondet, introduced into that bad company to represent the good writer, is recompensed for his articles for the imaginary "Débats" of the "Comédie humaine" by a rich marriage with a general's widow, and is thus enabled to give up newspaper work.

Balzac, besides, never bestowed a thought on the newspaper when working. He took his novels to magazines and to daily papers just as they were written, without preparing any breaks or skilfully suspended sentences at the end of each instalment so that readers should desire to know the continuation. He cut up his material into slices of about the same length, and sometimes a description of an arm-chair, begun in one issue, was not finished until the next day. He rightly refused to divide his work into little tableaux like those of a drama or a vaudeville; he thought merely of the finished book. That fashion of working often prevented the immediate success which newspaperdom

requires of the authors it employs. Eugène Sue and Alexandre Dumas were more frequently victorious than Balzac in those daily battles which then delighted the newspapers. He did not win any of that immense popularity which rewarded the "Mysteries of Paris" and "The Wandering Jew," "The Three Musketeers," and "Monte Cristo." "Les Paysans," a masterpiece, even caused a great number of subscribers to the "Presse," in which the first part appeared, to give up the paper; the publication of the work had to be stopped. Every day came letters asking that the novel be brought to a conclusion, — Balzac was thought wearisome. The great idea of the author of the "Comédie humaine" had not yet been grasped. It was to take modern society, and to write about Paris and our days that book which unfortunately no civilisation of antiquity has left to us. The complete edition of the "Comédie humaine," by collecting the scattered works, brought out the philosophical purpose of the writer; from that moment Balzac grew considerably in public opinion, and at last it ceased to consider him as "the most fertile of our romancers," — a stereotyped phrase which irritated him as much as being called "the author of 'Eugénie Grandet.'"

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

Many a criticism has been written on Balzac, he has been talked over in many a way, but this point — the absolute modernness of his genius, in my opinion the most characteristic, — has not been dwelt upon. Balzac owes nothing whatever to antiquity; the Greeks and Romans do not exist for him; he does not need, therefore, to call for freedom from them. In the make-up of his talent there is no trace of Homer, of Virgil, of Horace, not even of the "Viris Illustribus," — no one was ever less classical.

Balzac, like Gavarni, saw his contemporaries; but in art the highest difficulty is to paint what one beholds. It is quite possible to go through one's times without beholding them, and that is what many great minds have done. Nothing seems simpler, and yet nothing is harder than to be of one's own time; to wear neither green nor blue glasses, to think with one's brain, to make use of the speech of the day and not to reproduce in *centons* the phrases of one's predecessors. Now Balzac possessed that very rare merit. The ages have a perspective of their own and a distance of their own; then the great masses stand out, the lines become clear, the troublesome details vanish; by the help of classical remembrances and of the harmonious

names of antiquity, the meanest of rhetoricians can turn out a tragedy, a poem, a historical study. But to find yourself in the crowd, elbowed by it, and yet to catch its aspect, to follow its currents, to distinguish personalities, to draw the faces of so many different beings, to exhibit the secret motives of their actions, — that requires a very special genius, and the author of the "Comédie humaine" possessed that genius to a degree which no one has equalled before, and probably no one ever will equal.

This deep understanding of modern things made Balzac, I must say, rather insensible to plastic beauty; he read with careless eye the marmorean strophes in which Greek art sang the perfection of the human form, in the Greek Museum he looked at the Venus of Milo without any great pleasure; but the fair Parisian who stopped in front of the immortal statue, wrapped in her long cashmere shawl which fell without a fold from the neck to the bottom of the skirt, wearing a bonnet with a Chantilly veil, gloved with neat Jouvin gloves, showing from under the hem of her flounced dress the varnished tip of her shoe, made his eye sparkle with delight. He analysed her coquettish ways, he enjoyed to the full her skilled graces, think-

ing, as she did, that the goddess was rather thick-waisted and would not show to advantage in the drawing-rooms of Mesdames de Beauséant, de Listomère, or d'Espard. Ideal beauty, with its serene, clean lines, was too simple, cold, and plain for this complex, rich, diversified genius. He says somewhere, "A man must be a Raphael to paint many Virgins." Character pleased him more than style, and he preferred physiognomy to beauty. In his portraits of women he never idealised, but put a sign, a wrinkle, a fold, a spot of rose, a softened, tired corner, a vein too apparent, or some detail which indicated the wear and tear of life, and which a poet, painting the same face, would have unquestionably effaced, though no doubt he would have been wrong to do so.

I have not the least intention of criticising Balzac on this point, for that defect is his chief quality. He accepted no mythologies or traditions, and, happily for us, was unacquainted with that ideal form of the verse of poets, of the marbles of Greece and Rome, and of the paintings of the Renaissance, which interposes between the eye of the artist and reality. He loved the woman of our day such as she is, and not a pale statue. He loved her for her virtues, her vices, her fancies,

and her shawls, her dresses and bonnets, and followed her through life far beyond that point on the road where love abandons her; he prolonged her youth by several years; he gave her new springtimes and Indian summers; he gilded her sunsets with most splendid beams. We are so classical in France that even after two thousand years people have not perceived that roses in our climate do not bloom in April, as in the descriptions of the poets of antiquity, but in June, and that our women begin to be beautiful at the age when those of Greece, more precocious, ceased to be so. How many a charming type he has imagined or reproduced; Madame Firmiani, the Duchess de Maufrigneuse, the Princess de Cadignan, Madame de Mortsauf, Lady Dudley, the Duchess de Langeais, Madame Jules, Modeste Mignon, Diane de Chaulieu, to say nothing of the middle-class women, the *grisettes* and the ladies of his *demi-monde*.

And how well he loved our modern Paris, the beauty of which the amateurs of local colour and picturesqueness in his day appreciated so little! He traversed it in every direction by night and by day; there was not a blind lane, not a smelly passageway, not a narrow, muddy, black street which did not become

under his pen an etching worthy of Rembrandt, full of shadows, swarming with mystery in which shows faintly the trembling dot of light. Wealth and wretchedness, pleasure and suffering, shame and glory, beauty and ugliness, — he knew every bit of his beloved town. Paris was to him an enormous, hybrid, formidable monster, a polypus with a hundred thousand tentacles, which he listened to and watched live, and which formed in his eyes one vast individuality. On this point the reader should peruse the marvellous pages at the beginning of "La Fille aux yeux d'or," in which Balzac, trespassing upon the musician's art, has sought, as if he were writing a symphony for a great orchestra, to bring out the sound of all the voices, all the sobs, all the cries, all the rumours, all the groans of Paris at work.

It was from this modernism, on which I dwell purposely, that arose, without his suspecting it, the difficulty of labour which Balzac felt in the accomplishment of his work. The French language, as wrought out by the Classics of the seventeenth century, is fitted, if it is desired to conform to it, to express general ideas only, and to paint conventional figures amid vague surroundings. To express the innumerable details of charac-

ters, forms, architecture, styles of furniture, Balzac was obliged to make for himself a special tongue composed of technical terms, of the slang of science, of the studio, of the theatre, of the circus itself. Every word which had a meaning was welcomed, and the sentence, in order to receive it, opened an insert, a parenthesis, and complacently lengthened itself out. That is what made superficial critics say that Balzac was no writer. He possessed, although he did not think so, a style, and a very beautiful style, the necessary, inevitable, mathematical style of his ideas.

VI

No one can pretend to write a complete biography of Balzac. Any close intimacy with him was necessarily broken into by lapses, absences, and disappearances. Work absolutely ordered Balzac's life, and if — as he says himself with an accent of touching feeling, in a letter to his sister — he unhesitatingly sacrificed to that jealous god the joys and distractions of life, it cost him somewhat to give up every intercourse which had brought some friendship. To reply in a few words to a long letter became for him, in the course of his overwhelming labours, a piece of prodigality

which he could rarely indulge in. He was the slave of his work, and a willing slave. He had, with a very kind, tender heart, the egotism of a great worker. And who could have possibly thought of being annoyed at his forced negligence and his apparent forgetfulness, on beholding the results of his flights and his seclusions? When, having thoroughly finished his work, he reappeared, you would have sworn that he had left you but the night before, and he resumed the interrupted conversation just as though six months and sometimes more had not passed by. He made trips through France to study the localities in which he placed his "Scènes de la Vie de Province," and withdrew to the house of a friend in Touraine or Charente, finding there the peace which his creditors did not always allow him to enjoy in Paris. After some great work he occasionally allowed himself a somewhat longer trip into Germany, Upper Italy, or Switzerland, but these rapid excursions, troubled by the recollection of notes falling due and contracts to be kept or of insufficient means, fatigued him perhaps rather more than they rested him. His vast glance took in the heavens, the horizons, mountains, landscapes, monuments, houses, and interiors, and intrusted them to that comprehensive

and mighty memory which never failed him. Greater in this respect than descriptive poets, Balzac saw man at the same time as nature; he studied faces, manners, passions, characters with the same glance that he studied cities, costumes, and furniture. Just as the smallest fragment of bone was sufficient for Cuvier, so a detail sufficed him to imagine and to reconstitute accurately an individual whom he had caught sight of as he passed. Balzac's talent for observation has been often and rightly praised, but great as it was, it is not to be supposed that the author of the "Comédie humaine" always drew his portraits, so strictly true, from nature. His method in no wise resembled that of Henri Monnier, who followed in real life some individual in order to sketch him with pen and pencil, taking down his least gestures, noting his most insignificant remarks so as to obtain at one and the same time a photograph and a page of shorthand notes. Balzac, absorbed most of the time in his work, could not materially observe the two thousand characters which play their part in his comedy in one hundred acts; but every man, when he possesses the inner sight, contains humanity, and becomes a microcosm in which nothing is lacking. He has — not always, but often — ob-

served within himself the numerous types which live in his work. That is why they are complex, — no one can absolutely live another man's life; in such a case there are motives which remain obscure, unknown details, actions of which one loses track. Even in the most faithful portraits there must be some creation. So Balzac created much more than he saw, yet his remarkable faculties as an anatomist and a physiologist have merely served the poet in him, just as the assistant serves the professor to whom he hands the materials needed for a demonstration.

Perhaps this is the place to define truth as understood by Balzac. In these days of realism, it is well to be explicit on this point. Truth in art is not truth in nature; everything represented by means of art necessarily contains some small amount of conventionality. You may reduce it as much as you like, it still exists, even if it be merely perspective in painting, and language in literature. Balzac brings out, enlarges, heightens, cuts away, adds, shades, lights up, throws into the distance or draws near men and things according to the effect he seeks to produce; he is truthful no doubt, but with the additions and the sacrifices called for by art. He prepares rich, dark back-

grounds for his luminous figures; he sets his sombre figures against light backgrounds. Like Rembrandt he skilfully places as required the high light on the brow or the nose of the character. Sometimes he obtains fantastic and eccentric results in his descriptions by placing, without saying a word, a microscope under the reader's eyes; then the details appear with unnatural sharpness, with exaggerated minuteness, with incomprehensible and formidable enlargements; the tissues, the bracts, the pores, the villi, the grain, the fibres, the capillary ducts, assume an enormous importance, and turn a face insignificant to the naked eye into a sort of chimerical mask as amazing as those sculptured under the cornices of the Pont Neuf and vermiculated by time. Characters also are carried to extremes, as is proper in types. If Baron Hulot is a libertine, he is also the incarnation of lust; he is both a man and a vice, both a personality and an abstraction. He unites in himself all the scattered features of such a character. A writer of less genius would have drawn a portrait; Balzac has created a type. Men do not have as many muscles as Michael Angelo gives them in order to suggest the idea of strength. Balzac too is full of this useful exaggera-

tion, of those heavy strokes which bring out and support the outline. He imagines, as he copies, like a master, and he impresses his own touch on everything.

As this is not a literary criticism but a biographical study I am writing, I shall not carry these remarks farther. It is sufficient to make the suggestion. Balzac, whom the Realistic school seems to desire to claim as its leader, has no connection with its tendencies.

Unlike certain great literary men who feed on their own genius alone, Balzac wrote a great deal and with prodigious rapidity. He was fond of books and had brought together a fine library, which he intended to leave to his native city, a purpose which the indifference of his townsmen towards him caused him to abandon later. He absorbed in a few days the voluminous works of Swedenborg, which his mother owned, — she was at that time rather preoccupied with mysticism. That piece of reading gave us "Séraphita-Séraphitus," one of the most amazing products of modern literature. Never did Balzac approach nearer ideal beauty than he did in that book. The climb up the mountain is so ethereal, supernatural, and luminous that it fairly lifts you away from earth. There are two

colours only employed, — azure blue and snow white, with a few pearly tones for shadows. I know nothing more exquisite than the opening. The description of Norway with its fiords seen from above is dazzling and turns one's head.

"Louis Lambert" also shows traces of the reading of Swedenborg; but soon Balzac, who had borrowed the eagle pinions of the mystics to soar in the infinite, returned to the earth we inhabit, although his robust lungs could have breathed for any length of time that subtile air deadly to the weak; he abandoned the world beyond after that flight and returned to real life. Perhaps his splendid genius would have vanished too soon, had he continued to rise within the boundless heights of mysticism, and we ought to count ourselves happy that he was satisfied with "Louis Lambert" and "Séraphita-Séraphitus," which sufficiently represent in the "Comédie humaine" the supernatural side, and which open a wide enough door into the invisible world.

Let me now pass to more intimate details. The great Goethe had a horror of three things, — one of them was tobacco smoke. Like the Jupiter of the German poetic Olympus, Balzac could not bear tobacco under any form whatever; he anathematised pipes and pro-

scribed cigars; he did not tolerate even the smallest Spanish cigarette. The Asiatic *hookah* alone found favour in his eyes, and even that he tolerated merely as a curious trifle and on account of its local colour. In his philippics against Nicot's weed he did not imitate the doctor who, during a dissertation upon the evils of snuff, never ceased to take great pinches from a big snuffbox placed near him. Balzac never smoked; his "Theory of Stimulants" contains a regular indictment against tobacco, and I have no doubt that, had he been a sultan like Amurat, he would have caused all obstinate smokers and those who had relapsed to be beheaded. His great predilection was for coffee, which did him so much harm, and perchance killed him, although he was built to live a hundred years.

Was Balzac right or wrong? Is tobacco, as he maintained, a deadly poison, and does it intoxicate those whom it does not turn into brutes? Is it the Western opium which dulls will and mind? That is a question I cannot solve, but I shall name here a few famous persons of our day, some of whom smoked and others who did not. Goethe and Heine, singularly enough, Germans though they were, did not smoke. Byron

smoked; but Hugo does not, any more than Alexandre Dumas senior; on the other hand, Alfred de Musset, Eugène Sue, George Sand, Mérimée, Paul de Saint-Victor, Émile Augier, Ponsard smoked and smoke still, and yet they are not quite fools.

This aversion, besides, was shared by nearly all the men born with our century or somewhat earlier. At that time only sailors or soldiers smoked; women fainted at the smell of a pipe or a cigar. They have progressed since then, and more than one pair of rosy lips lovingly presses the gold mouthpiece of a *puro* in a boudoir changed into a smoking-room. Dowagers and turbaned mothers have alone preserved their old antipathy, and stoically behold their drawing-rooms deserted by refractory youth.

Every time that Balzac is obliged for the verisimilitude of his story to allow one of his characters to indulge in this horrible habit, his concise, disdainful sentence exhibits secret blame. "As for du Marsay," he says, "he was busy smoking cigars, —" and he must have been very fond of that *condottiere* of dandyism, to allow him to smoke in his work.

A delicate-mannered woman, no doubt, inspired Balzac with that aversion; that is a point I cannot

clear up. What is certain is that the Revenue never made a penny by him.

Talking of women, Balzac, who described them so well, must certainly have known them. In one of the letters he wrote to his sister, Madame de Surville, when he was still young and quite unknown, he states the ideal hope of his life in two words, — to be famous and beloved. The first part of the programme — which every artist has marked out for himself — was most fully realised. Was the second fulfilled also? The opinion of the most intimate friends of Balzac is that his loves were at the most platonic, but Madame de Surville smiles at the suggestion, with a smile full of feminine finesse and of modest reticence. She maintains that her brother was uncommonly discreet, and that if he had chosen to speak, he could have told many things. No doubt that is true, and Balzac's strong-box must have contained more notes written in delicate, sloping handwriting, than the lacquered coffers of Canalis. One scents woman in his work, *odor di femina*. When one penetrates into it, one hears, behind the doors which close on the steps of the secret staircase, the rustle of silk and the creaking of shoes. The semicircular, padded drawing-room of the rue des

Batailles, of which I have quoted the description inserted by the author in the "Fille aux yeux d'or," did not remain absolutely virgin, as many of us supposed it did. In the whole course of my intimacy with him, — which lasted from 1836 to the day of his death, — once alone did Balzac allude, in the most respectful words, to an attachment of his early youth. Even then he told me only the first name of the woman, whose remembrance, after so many years, still brought tears to his eyes. If he had told me any more, I should certainly not violate his confidence. The genius of a great writer belongs to the world, but his heart is his own. I merely touch, by the way, on this tender and delicate side of Balzac's life, because all I have to say about it is to his honour. His reserve and his mystery are characteristic of a well-bred man; if he was beloved, as he wished to be in his youthful dreams, the world, at least, has never known aught of it.

Do not imagine that on this account Balzac was austere and chaste in his speech. The author of the "Contes drôlatiques" was too well acquainted with Rabelais, and too much after the fashion of Pantagruel, to avoid jokes; he knew good stories and he invented

others. His broad jokes, interlarded with gallic crudities, would have made horrified cant cry out "Shocking!" but his laughing, talkative lips were sealed like the tomb when a serious feeling was in question. He scarcely allowed his best friends to guess at his love for a distinguished foreign lady, — a love which may be spoken of since it was crowned by marriage. It was to that passion, which he had felt for a long time, that his distant excursions were due, although until the very last day, the object of them remained a mystery to his friends.

Absorbed in his work, Balzac did not think of trying the drama until very late. Public opinion in general considered him — wrongly, I think — not well fitted for it, on the score of a few more or less risky attempts of his. The man who created so many types, analysed so many characters, gave life to so many people, was bound to succeed on the stage. But as I have said, Balzac was not spontaneous, and the proofs of a drama cannot be corrected. If he had lived, he would unquestionably have found his right line and obtained success after writing a dozen plays. The "Marâtre," played at the Théâtre Historique, was very nearly a masterpiece; "Mercadet," slightly arranged by a

clever adapter, obtained a long posthumous success at the Gymnase.

I am bound to say, however, that what induced him to make the attempt was rather the hope of earning a large sum which would free him at once from his financial embarrassments, than a genuine vocation. Every one knows that a play is much more profitable than a book. A series of performances from which one draws rather large profits soon produces by accumulation considerable sums; if the work of combination is greater, the material labour is less. It takes several dramas to fill a volume, and while you are walking or resting idly with your slippers on, the footlights are lighted, the stage is set, the actors declaim and gesticulate, and you find you have made more money than by scribbling away for a week, painfully bowed over your desk. Some melodramas have brought in more to their authors than "Notre-Dame de Paris" did to Victor Hugo or the "Parents pauvres" to Balzac.

It is curious that Balzac, who thought out his novels elaborately and corrected them with such obstinate minuteness, seemed, when it was a question of writing a play, seized with a fever of rapidity. He not only did not re-write his plays eight or ten times as he did

his novels, he did not really write them at all. Scarcely had he fixed upon his plan than he appointed a day for the reading and called upon his friends to work up the matter. Orliac, Lassailly, Laurent-Jan, myself, and others have often been summoned in the middle of the night or at extraordinarily early hours. In such cases we had to drop everything, for every moment's delay caused the loss of millions.

An urgent note from Balzac summoned me one day to repair at once to the rue de Richelieu, where he had a room in the house of Buisson the tailor. I found Balzac robed in his monkish gown and stamping with impatience on the blue and white carpet of a dainty little attic, the walls of which were hung with Carmelite chintz with blue ornaments, for in spite of his apparent neglectfulness, he had the instinct of interior arrangements and always prepared a comfortable nest for his laborious night-watches; in none of his lodgings did one meet with that picturesque disorder so dear to the artist.

"At last, here is Théo!" he exclaimed as he saw me. "You slow coach, you tardigrade, you sloth! Why do you not hurry up? Why do you not make haste? You ought to have been here an hour ago.

To-morrow I have to read to Horrel a great drama in five acts."

"Oh! and you want my advice?" I replied, as I settled myself in an arm-chair after the fashion of a man who makes ready to submit to a long course of reading.

Balzac divined my thought by my attitude, and he said in the quietest possible way, "The play is not yet written."

"The devil!" said I. "Well, you will have to put off the reading for six weeks."

"No; we shall knock up the dramorama together in order to get the pay. I have a heavy note to meet at such a date."

"It is impossible to do it before to-morrow, — there would not be time to copy it."

"This is how I have arranged matters: you are to write one act, Orliac another, Laurent-Jan the third, de Belloy the fourth, and I the fifth; and I shall read at noon as agreed upon. An act in a drama does not have more than four or five hundred lines; you can write four or five hundred lines of dialogue during a day and a night."

"Tell me the subject, the plan, sketch the char-

acters in a few words, and I will set to work," I replied, pretty well upset.

"Ah!" he cried with an air of superb weariness and magnificent disdain, "if I have to tell you the subject, it will never be done."

I had not thought I was indiscreet in putting such a question, which struck Balzac as perfectly idle.

Managing with much difficulty to get some notion of the plot, I set to work to dash off a scene, a few words alone of which remained in the final work, which was not read the next day, as will readily be believed. I do not know what the other collaborators did, but the only one who seriously set to work was Laurent-Jan, to whom the play is dedicated. That play was "Vautrin." Every one knows that the dynastic and pyramidal tuft of hair which Frédérick Lemaître bethought himself of wearing in his disguise as a Mexican general, drew down upon the play the anger of the authorities. "Vautrin," interdicted, was performed but once, and poor Balzac was like the milk-maid with her jars upset; the prodigious sums which he had figured as the probable profits of his drama melted into ciphers; which did not prevent his refusing in a dignified fashion the compensation offered by the ministry.

At the beginning of this study I have spoken occasionally of the dandiacal fancies exhibited occasionally by Balzac; I spoke of his blue coat with buttons of massive gold, his huge cane ornamented with a mass of turquoises, his appearances in society and in the infernal box. This splendour lasted but for a time, and Balzac recognised that he was not fitted to play the part of Alcibiades or Brummel. He could be met, especially in the morning when he hastened to the printing office to carry copy and to fetch away proofs, in an infinitely less superb dress. Then he wore a green hunting-jacket with brass buttons in the shape of foxes' heads, trousers with straps, checkered gray and black, tucked into big shoes, a red kerchief twisted rope fashion around his neck, a dismal hat brushed the wrong way, with a blue band stained with perspiration, — garments which covered rather than clothed "the most fertile of our novelists." But maugre the disorder and poverty of the costume, no one would have thought of mistaking for a vulgar stranger the stout man with blazing eyes, mobile nostrils, ruddy cheeks, illumined by genius, who passed by carried away by his dream as in a whirlwind. At sight of him sarcasm stopped on the street boy's lips and the serious man

ceased to smile; one guessed that he was a king of thought.

Sometimes, on the contrary, he would be seen walking slowly, his nose in the air, his eyes hunting around, following first one side of the street, then examining the other, gaping, not at the birds, but at the signs. He was looking for names to give to his characters. He rightly claimed that a name can no more be invented than a word. According to him, names came of themselves, like languages; real names, besides, possessed a life, a meaning, a variety, a cabalistic power, and it was impossible to consider the choice of a name too important. Léon Gozlan has told charmingly in his "Balzac en pantoufles," how the famous Z. Marcas of the "Revue parisienne" was discovered. A stove-man's sign furnished the long sought for name of Gubetta to Victor Hugo, who was no less careful than Balzac in the appellations he gave to his characters.

The hard life of night work had, in spite of his strong constitution, left its mark upon Balzac's face, and I find in "Albert Savarus" a portrait of himself drawn by him, which represents him such as he was at that time (1842), with some slight modifications.

"A splendid head, the black hair already streaked with white, hair like that of Saint Peter or Saint Paul in pictures, with thick, shining curls, hair as hard as horsehair; a neck round and white like a woman's; a splendid brow, divided by that deep wrinkle which great projects create, which deep meditations imprint on the brow of great men; an olive complexion flushed with red spots; a square nose, fiery eyes, hollow cheeks, with two long wrinkles indicative of suffering; a mouth with a pleasant smile, and a small chin; two small crow's-feet on the temples; hollow eyes rolling under deep-set eyebrows like two globes of fire; but in spite of these marks of violent passions, a look of calmness and deep resignation; a voice of penetrating sweetness, surprising by its facility, — the real orator's voice, sometimes clean and crafty, sometimes insinuating, and thunderous at need, then turning to sarcasm and becoming incisive. Mr. Albert Savarus is of middle stature, neither stout nor thin. Finally, his hands are like the hands of a prelate."

In this portrait, which is very faithful on the whole, Balzac has somewhat idealised himself for the sake of the novel; and diminished his weight by a few pounds, a license quite permissible to a hero beloved of the Duchess of Argaiolo and Madame Philomène de Watteville. "Albert Savarus," one of the least known and least frequently quoted novels of Balzac, contains many details, somewhat modified, as to his habits of

life and work. One might even see in it, were it permissible to lift such veils, confidences of another kind.

Balzac had left the rue des Batailles for the Jardies; he then went to live at Passy. The house which he inhabited, situated upon a sharp slope, presented a rather curious architectural arrangement: you entered it somewhat as wine enters into a bottle, — you had to go down three stories to reach the ground floor. The entrance door on the street side opened almost in the roof, like an attic. I once dined there with Léon Gozlan. It was a strange dinner prepared in accordance with the economic recipes invented by Balzac. At my express request the famous onion soup, endowed with so many hygienic and symbolical virtues, and which nearly killed Lassailly, did not form part of it, but the wines were wonderful. Every bottle had its history, and Balzac told it with unequalled eloquence, spirit, and conviction. The claret had thrice gone around the world; the Château-Neuf du Pape went back to fabulous days; the rum was drawn from a cask tossed by the ocean for more than a century, and which had been opened with axes, so thick was the crust formed upon it by shells, madrepores, and seaweed. Our palates, surprised, irritated by acid flavours, in vain protested

against these illustrious origins; Balzac was as serious as an augur, and in spite of the proverb we looked at him in vain, we could not make him laugh. At dessert appeared pears so ripe, so large, so mellow, so juicy, that they would have been fit for a king's banquet. Balzac devoured five or six, the juice running down his chin. He believed that this fruit was healthful, and he ate it in such quantities as much for hygienic reasons as because he was fond of it. He already felt the first symptoms of the disease which was to kill him. Death, with its lean fingers, was feeling that robust body to know where to attack it, and finding it weak nowhere, it killed him by plethora and hypertrophy. Balzac's cheeks were always flushed and marked with those red spots which are to careless eyes an indication of health; but to the observer the yellow hepatitic tones surrounded with their golden halo the tired eyelids. The glance, made brighter by that warm, brown tone, appeared but more brilliant and more sparkling, and lulled anxiety.

At this moment Balzac was very full of occult sciences, of chiromancy, of cartomancy. He had been told of a sibyl more amazing even than Mademoiselle Lenormant, and he induced me, as well as

Madame de Girardin and Méry, to go and consult her with him. The pythoness lived at Auteuil, I have forgotten in what street; nor does it matter, for the address given us was the wrong one. We came plump upon a family of worthy townspeople enjoying the country,—the husband, the wife, and an old mother, whose looks Balzac, who was certain she must be the fortune-teller, maintained were absolutely cabalistic. The good lady, not at all flattered at being taken for a witch, got angry; the husband took us for practical jokers or rascals; the younger woman laughed loud and long, and the maid prudently hastened to lock up the silver. We had to withdraw in confusion, but Balzac maintained that that was the house, and having climbed back into the carriage, muttered insults addressed to the old woman: "Stryge, harpy, magician, empresa, larva, lamia, lemur, ghoul, psylla, aspiole," and whatever a thorough knowledge of Rabelais' litanies could suggest in the way of curious expressions. We tried in a few other places, still fruitlessly, and Delphine maintained that Balzac had imagined this "resource of Quinola" in order to be driven to Auteuil, where he had some business, and to have pleasant companions with him.

I fancy, however, that Balzac found for himself that Madame Fontaine whom we were looking for together, for in the "Comédiens sans le savoir" he has described her between her hen Bibouche and her toad Astaroth, with frightful, fantastic truthfulness, if such words can be combined. Did he seriously consult her, or did he go to see her simply as an observer? There are certain passages in the "Comédie humaine" which seem to imply that Balzac did have a sort of faith in occult sciences, concerning which officially recognised sciences have not yet spoken their last word. About this time Balzac began to exhibit a fancy for old furniture, boxes, and china. The smallest bit of worm-eaten furniture which he bought in the rue de Lappe always came from some illustrious place, and he developed detailed genealogies concerning the simplest knick-knacks. He concealed them here and there, always on account of those fantastic creditors, in whose existence I began to disbelieve. I even amused myself by spreading the report that Balzac was a millionaire, and that he was purchasing old stockings from dealers in insects and beetles to hide ounces, quadruples, Genovines, cross-pieces, pillar-pieces and double louis, after the manner of Father

Grandet; I reported everywhere that he had three wells, like Abul Khasim, filled to the mouth with carbuncles, dinars, and omans. "Théo will be the cause of my having my throat cut some morning with his nonsense," said Balzac, annoyed and delighted at one and the same time.

My jokes gained some appearance of likelihood from the new dwelling inhabited by Balzac, in the rue Fortuné, in the Beaujon quarter, less peopled then than now. He had there a small, mysterious house, which had sheltered the loves of a luxurious financier. From the outside one caught a glimpse over the wall of a sort of cupola, formed by the arched ceiling of a boudoir, and of the fresh paint of the closed shutters.

When one entered this nook, which was not easy, for the master of the house concealed himself with excessive care, a thousand details of excessive luxury and comfort were seen which contradicted the poverty that he affected. He received me, however, one day, and I saw a dining-room wainscoted with old oak, with a table, chimneypiece, sideboards, credences, and chairs of carved wood which would have made Berruguete, Cornejo, Duque, and Verbruggen envious;

a drawing-room hung with golden yellow damask, with doors, cornices, plinths, and windows of ebony; a library of books placed in cases inlaid with mother-of-pearl and copper in the style of Boulle; a bathroom in yellow breccia with stucco *bassi-relievi;* a domed boudoir, the old paintings of which had been restored by Edmond Hédouin; a gallery lighted from above, which I recognised later in the collection of "Cousin Pons;" on the shelves all sorts of curiosities, Dresden and Sèvres porcelain, vases of *craquelé* celadon; and on the stairs, which were covered with a carpet, tall Chinese vases and a splendid lantern suspended by a red silk rope.

"You must have emptied one of Abul Khasim's hiding-places," said I laughingly to Balzac, as I beheld these splendours. "You see, I was right when I said that you are a millionaire."

"I am poorer than ever," he replied, assuming a humble and contrite look. "None of that belongs to me. I furnished the house for a friend who is expected, — I am only the watchman and guardian of the house."

I am quoting his words literally. He made the same reply to several persons, who were as much

amazed as I. The riddle was soon solved by the marriage of Balzac to the woman whom he had loved for so long a time.

There is a Turkish proverb which says, "When the house is finished Death enters." That is why sultans always take care to have a palace in course of construction, which they are very careful not to finish. Life appears to want nothing to be complete save misfortune; there is nothing to be so dreaded as a wish which has been fulfilled.

The famous debts were paid at last, the desired marriage was an accomplished fact, the nest made for happiness was lined with down and cotton; and as if they had foreseen his approaching death, those who envied Balzac began to praise him. The "Parents pauvres" and "Cousin Pons," in which the author's genius shone in all its brilliancy, were unanimously admired. This was too much glory; there was nothing left for him but to die. The disease made rapid progress, but no one believed in a fatal ending, so much did we all trust in Balzac's athletic constitution. I believed firmly that he would see us all to the grave.

I was going to take a trip to Italy, and before leaving I wished to say good-bye to our illustrious friend.

He had driven out to pass some exotic curiosity through the customs. I went away reassured, and at the moment when I was getting into the carriage I was handed a note from Madame de Balzac which kindly explained, with polite regret, why I had not found her husband at home. At the foot of the note Balzac had written these words: —

"I can neither read nor write any more.

"De Balzac."

I have preserved as a relic that dread line, probably the last ever written by the author of the "Comédie humaine." It was — but I did not understand it at first — the last cry, the "*Eli, lama sabacthani*" of the thinker and worker. The thought that Balzac could die did not even occur to me.

A few days later I was eating an ice at the Café Florian on the Piazza San Marco; I opened the *Journal des Débats*, one of the few French papers which are allowed in Venice, and I saw in it the announcement of Balzac's death. I nearly fell from my chair on the stone flags of the Piazza, thunderstruck at the news; and my grief was soon mingled with an unchristian impulse of indignation and revolt, for all

souls are of equal value before God. I had just been visiting the lunatic asylum in the island of San Servolo, and I had seen there decrepit idiots, octogenarian wrecks, human larvæ, deprived even of animal instinct; and I asked myself why that mighty brain had gone out like a candle on which one blows, when tenacious life lingered in these shadowed brains, faintly traversed from time to time by deceitful gleams.

Eight years have elapsed since that fatal day, and every day Balzac looms larger. When he mingled with his contemporaries he was imperfectly appreciated, for he was seen only partially and under aspects at times unfavourable; now the edifice which he built rises the higher as one draws away from it, like a cathedral in a city, masked by the neighbouring houses, but which on the horizon looms up vast above the lower roofs and monuments. The monument has not been completed, but such as it is, it is terrifying in its enormity, and generations to come will ask themselves with surprise, Who was the giant that single-handed raised these formidable blocks and built so high that tower of Babel in which a whole world is buzzing?

Dead though he is, Balzac still has defamers. The commonplace reproach of immorality, the last insult

of powerless and jealous mediocrity, or often of mere stupidity, is still cast on his memory. Not only is the author of the "Comédie humaine" not immoral, he is an austere moralist. A Royalist and a Catholic, he stands up for authority, praises religion, preaches duty, blames passions, and believes that happiness is to be obtained only through marriage and within the family circle.

"Man," he says, "is neither good nor wicked; he is born with instincts and appetites; society, far from depraving him, as Rousseau maintained, improves him and makes him better, but interest develops also his evil tendencies. Christianity, and especially Catholicism, being, as I have stated in the 'Médecin de campagne,' a complete system for the repression of the depraved tendencies of man, is the most powerful factor in social order."

And with an ingenuity becoming to a great man, foreseeing the reproach of immorality which wrong-headed people would address to him, he numbers the characters irreproachably virtuous which are to be met in the "Comédie humaine": Pierrette Lorrain, Ursule Mirouët, Constance Birotteau, La Fosseuse, Eugénie Grandet, Marguerite Claës, Pauline de Ville-

noix, Madame Jules, Madame de la Chanterie, Ève Chardon, Mademoiselle d'Esgrignon, Madame Firmiani, Agathe Rouget, Renée de Maucombe; without counting among the men Joseph Le Bas, Genestas, Benassis, the *curé* Bonnet, Dr. Minoret, Pillerault, David Séchard, the two Birotteaus, Chaperon the *curé*, Popinot the judge, Bourgeat, the Sauviats, the Taschérons, etc.

Rascally figures are not lacking, it is true, in the "Comédie humaine," but is Paris peopled exclusively by angels?

HENRY MURGER

BORN IN 1822 — DIED IN 1861

HENRY MURGER thought chiefly about youth, — indeed, he may be said to have thought of youth alone. Life seemed to have stopped with him with his twentieth year; he did not look forward, but backward, and at every step he took he turned his head around. The present had scarcely any existence for him; he lived in the past alone. He sorrowed because he no longer experienced the sweet surprise caused by emotions and feelings which is experienced but once, and he constantly returned to it in thought. He was wholly retrospective, and in order to give colour to his poetry, he had to pass it through the prism of remembrance. Although he was thirty-eight when he died, his talent was always that of a young man of twenty-five. Like certain actors who continue, in spite of their age, to play lovers' rôles, he could play the parts of youth only. On his tree of life the flower never turned

into fruit; it was bound to remain a flower forever, and if it fell from its stem, it was to perfume with its faded imprint the pages of a reliquary. A bunch of faded violets, a bit of faded ribbon, a lock of hair under glass, a stray glove, formed the poet's library. He read in his heart only, and reproduced only the impression he had felt, and that a long time afterwards, when it was idealised through regret and melancholy. The pearls in his jewel case are the tears of bygone days which he preserved. Most careful is he of those dear treasures. With a trembling hand, in spite of his sarcastic look, he removes the sacred dust, and when not observed, turns a tearful glance towards the wall on which hangs near a Clodion the profile of Mimi or Musette.

I am speaking of the poet alone. As a journalist, as a writer, as a wit, he had other ways. Henry Murger was a child of Bohemia; he had dwelt in its seven castles so long sought by Charles Nodier, and it is not in so strange a country, where paradoxes are commonplaces, that many illusions can be preserved. The verdicts of wiseacres are reversed forthwith, and picaresque wisdom is condensed into maxims by the side of which La Rochefoucauld's appear childish.

No one there is duped by anything or anybody, and the Bohemian, though in the midst of civilised life, attains to the suspicious sagacity of the Mohican. His defensive weapons are the arrows of wit, and some of his kind do not scruple to poison them. Murger, as I have said, never belonged to that class, but his hand was steady, his eye true, and his flashing bolts always struck their mark. Tender-hearted, he was sceptically minded; on returning from a sentimental turn in the woods, he took a turn behind the scenes at the theatre, and the journalist rallied the lover so hard that no one would have been tempted to make fun of him, not even his own mistress.

Murger had long since left the country which artists and poets traverse, at the beginning of their career, at least, when fathers refuse allowances and budding talent gives promise only of a future harvest; but he seemed to dwell in it still, so much did his thoughts delight to go back to that time of erratic liberty and of joyous want, in which hope bites so gaily with its beautiful teeth the hard bread of misery; and indeed, it is the happiest time, and I can understand the regrets felt for its disappearance. But it lasts a few years only, and there is no sadder sight than a gray-haired Bohemian or

college student. The Philistines, of yore the victims of so many practical jokes, are rightly entitled to rally him.

Murger lived at Marlotte, near Fontainebleau, and in his waking dreams he often lost himself in the forest, in spite of the guiding lines and the footpaths laid out by the man who has been surnamed the Sylvan; but inspiration came to the poet just when he lost his way. There, in the heart of strong, healthy nature, far from the feverish bustle of the city, that charming writer worked slowly and leisurely, so that at times his love of perfection seemed to be idleness. He lived his youth over again within himself, and reproduced it in tales sad but smiling, bright yet tender. During the whole summer long he vanished from all eyes, but in winter he occasionally went into society, which ever welcomed him gladly. He might be met on the boulevard, in magazine offices, and in his prodigal conversation he scattered in fifteen minutes more clever hits than were needed for a whole play.

His book, "Winter Nights," opens with a sonnet by way of preface, in which the author banteringly wishes all sorts of prosperity to the being who may be benevolent enough, artless enough, old-

fashioned enough, to pay a crown, in these days of prose, for three hundred pages of verse. This sonnet, to use one of Murger's own expressions, is the shrill fife which jeers at the violoncello, for naught can be more tender, more suave, more full of love, than the poems to which this buffoon sonnet is prefixed.

Love, as understood by Murger, is of a particular sort. It is vain to look in his work for ardent prayers, hyperbolical compliments, exaggerated lamentations, any more than for high-flown dithyrambics and odes of triumphant intoxication; nor must one look for deep despair, for unending sobs, and cries that rend the heavens. Love with him shows itself mostly in the form of remembrance. If love has been fortunate, it is silent, nor will it speak unless it has suffered from betrayal, infidelity, or death. When pleasure itself was silent, grief now utters a sigh. Indeed, what Murger likes in love is suffering; he delights to feel the thorn rankling in the wound, and would not have it drawn. Leaning sadly on his elbow, he watches the red drops form and fall one by one, nor will he stanch the flow, even if his life is to ebb away with it. He did not choose his mistress; chance formed their ephemeral

tie, caprice will loosen it; the swallow came in by the open window; some fine day it will fly away, obeying its migratory instinct. The poet knows it, and it is unnecessary to repeat to him Shakespeare's words, "Frailty, thy name is woman." He has foreseen the betrayal, yet he suffers from it, and mourns over it with such gentle bitterness, with such tearful irony, with such resigned sadness, that the reader shares his emotion. Perhaps he did not love the woman he regrets when she was faithful to him, but now, transfigured as she is by absence, he worships her. A charming figure has replaced a commonplace ideal, and Musette becomes the equal of Béatrix or Laura.

Two poems — "The Requiem of Love" and "Musette's Song" — in that part of the book entitled "Lovers," strike the key-note of Murger's poetry. In the first, the poet, addressing himself to the mistress who had wrung his heart with feverish, cruel delight, like the Chinese princess who almost fainted as she tore with her long, transparent nails the most precious silken stuffs, seeks an air to which he may sing the requiem of his dead love. He tries one after another, but every melody recalls a remembrance.

"Oh, not that motive!" cries the poet; "my heart, which I believed dead, trembles in my breast. I have heard it so often warbled by your lips. Nor that waltz, — that waltz which hurt me so much! Still less that *lied* which Germans sang in the Meudon woods and which we repeated together! No music, — but let us talk of our old love without hatred or anger." And Murger recalls the winter evenings spent in the little room, by the fireside on which the kettle hums its regular refrain; the long walks in spring through the meadows and the woods, and the innocent delights enjoyed in the midst of kindly nature; he composes once more that eternal poem of youth which six thousand years have never made old. Then comes the disappointment. One day the poet is alone, the fair one is gone. Good-bye to the gray shoes, the linen dress and the straw hat adorned with a natural flower! Rich silks rustle around the slender form, a cashmere shawl hangs in folds from the shoulders below the straying blond hair, a costly bracelet sparkles on the plump arm, rings cover the fingers, formerly browner, but now white through idleness. He might have expected it, the story is trite and common, the poet himself laughs madly at

it. "But my laughter is a sarcasm; my pen, as I write, trembles in my hand, and when I smile, my tears, like a hot shower, wash out the words upon the paper."

The second, which is "Musette's Song," strikes me as a perfect masterpiece of grace, tenderness, and originality. I cannot do better than to transcribe it, it is the best way to praise such a poem: —

"Yesterday, as I saw the swallow bringing back to us the time of spring, I remembered the fair one who loved me when she had time, and during the long, long day peaceful I gazed upon the old almanac of the year gone by, when she and I so greatly loved.

"No, my youth is not yet dead, nor is the thought of you vanished now; for if at my door you were to knock, my heart, Musette, would open quick, since at your name it always starts. O thou dear Muse of faithlessness, come back again to eat with me the blessed bread of happiness.

"The furniture of our little room, these dear old friends of our dead love, already smile at the mere hope of your return. Come back; you will recognise, my dear, all those who your departure mourned, — the little bed, and the great glass in which so often you drank my share.

"Again you will wear that fair white dress with which of yore you were adorned; and as of yore, on Sunday next into the woods we'll wander free. Under the arbour at even

seated, again we 'll drink the bright, clear wine in which your song its wing did dip before in air it flew away.

"The kindly god who bears no grudge for the naughty tricks you have played to me, will not refuse to grant a moon to light our kissings in the grove. Lovely nature you shall find as fair to-day as then, and ever, O my witching dear, ready upon our loves to smile.

"Musette, to whom remembrance came when carnival time drew to an end, on one fine morning returned to me like capricious bird to its old nest. But as I kissed the faithless one, my heart no emotion felt, and Musette — Musette no more — said I was no more myself.

"Farewell, begone, my dear, dear one; for now indeed, with our last love, our youth is buried deep within the old almanac. Only by stirring up the ashes of the fair days it once did hold can remembrance ever give us back the key to ope our lost paradise."

Two poems full of sad presentiment — alas, too true! — close the book. The one is an almost caressing appeal to death; the other a sort of testament, half serious, half ironical, in which the author, doubting whether he will be able to take his seat among the group of elect who will see "l'Africaine," makes his last will and arranges for his funeral, and draws a design for his tomb. Thomas Hood, the witty editor of "Punch" and the author of that "Song of the Shirt"

which made such a sensation in England, also indulged in that gloomy fancy of drawing his own monument, and for epitaph he put on it, "He wrote the 'Song of the Shirt'." So might be written on Murger's tomb, "He wrote 'Musette's Song'."

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

BORN IN 1821 — DIED IN 1867

SHORT though his life was, — he was scarce forty-six when he died, — Charles Baudelaire had time to make his mark and to inscribe his name upon that wall of the nineteenth century on which are already written so many signatures, many of them no longer legible; but his will remain, I have no doubt, for it is that of a man whose talent was original and strong, who disdained even to excess the commonplaces which make popularity easy, who cared only for what was rare, difficult, and strange, whose literary conscience was quick, who never, in spite of the necessities of life, let go a work before he thought it perfect, who weighed every word as the "Misers" of Quentin Matsys weigh doubtful ducats, who read proofs ten times over, who submitted his poems to the subtile critic that was himself, and who sought to realise with unwearying efforts the particular ideal which he had set up.

Born in India and knowing English thoroughly, he began with translations of Edgar Poe, which are so admirable that they appear to be original, and that the author's thoughts are improved by the passage from one tongue into the other. Baudelaire naturalised in France that author whose imagination is so learnedly eccentric, and by the side of whom Hoffmann is but a Paul de Kock in fantastic literature. Thanks to Baudelaire, I enjoyed the uncommonly rare experience of a totally unknown literary savour; my mental palate was as much surprised as when I drank at the Exposition some of the American drinks, sparkling mixtures of ice, soda water, ginger, and other exotic ingredients. Into what mad transports of delight I was thrown by the reading of "The Gold Bug," the "Fall of the House of Usher," and all those tales so truly called extraordinary. The fantastic effects produced by algebraic and scientific processes, tales such as "The Murder in the Rue Morgue," wrought out as carefully as a judicial inquiry, and especially "The Stolen Letter," which in its sagacious inductions could give points to the cleverest detectives, excited curiosity to the highest degree, and Baudelaire's name became in some sort inseparable from the American author's.

The translations were preceded by a most interesting study of Edgar Poe from the biographical and metaphysical point of view. It was impossible to analyse more cleverly a genius so eccentric that at times it seems to border on madness, and which has for its basis a pitiless logic that carries the consequences of an idea to extremes. The mixture of heat and coldness, of intoxication and mathematical processes, the strident raillery flushed with most poetical lyrical effusions were thoroughly understood by Baudelaire. He felt the liveliest sympathy for the proud and eccentric character which so greatly shocked American cant, an unpleasant variety of English cant, and the assiduous reading of that dizzy mind had a great influence upon him. Edgar Poe was not only a writer of extraordinary tales, a journalist whom no one has surpassed in the art of arranging a scientific canard, a supreme practical joker, playing upon gaping credulity; he was also an æsthete of the very first order, a very great poet, whose art was most refined and complex. His poem of "The Raven" produces, by the gradation of strophes and the disquieting persistency of the refrain, an intense effect of melancholy, terror, and fatal presentiment which it is difficult to resist. It is not impugning

Baudelaire's originality to say that in the "Flowers of Evil" there is a reminiscence, as it were, of Edgar Poe's mysterious manner, with a background of Romanticist colouring.

A few years ago, it not being my habit to wait for the death of my friends before praising them, I wrote an essay on Baudelaire, prefixed to a selection of his poems included in the "Collection of French Poets," in which occurs a passage on the "Flowers of Evil," the most important and the most individual work of the author. As this passage cannot be suspected of posthumous complaisance, I may repeat about the poet, who has died so prematurely and unfortunately, what I said about him when alive:—

"In one of Hawthorne's tales, there is a description of a curious garden in which a botanist, who is also a toxicologist, has collected the flora of poisonous plants. These plants, with their strangely cut leaves of a blackish, or glaucous mineral-green, as if they were dyed with sulphate of copper, possess a sinister and formidable beauty; in spite of their charm, they are felt to be dangerous; their haughty, provoking, and perfidious attitude betrays the consciousness of mighty power or irresistible seductiveness. Their blooms, fiercely striped and barred, of a purple colour resembling clotted blood, or chlorotic white, exhale bitter, intoxicating perfumes; in

their poisonous calyxes dew is transformed into *aqua tofana*, and around them buzz only cantharides with their corselets of green and gold, and steel-blue flies whose sting causes carbuncles. The euphorbia, the deadly nightshade, the henbane, the hemlock, the belladonna mingle their cold venom with the burning poisons of the tropics and of India. The manchineel displays its little apples, as deadly as those that hung from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the upas tree drops its milky juice which burns deeper than acid. Above the garden, hovers a deadly vapour which suffocates birds as they pass through it. Yet the doctor's daughter lives with impunity amid these mephitic miasmas; her lungs breathe in without danger an atmosphere which to any one else than her father and herself would be certain death. She makes necklaces of these flowers, she adorns her hair and perfumes her bosom with them, she bites their petals as maids nibble at the petals of roses. Slowly saturated with venomous juices, she has become herself a living poison; she neutralises all others. Her beauty, like that of the plants of the garden, has something weird, fatal, morbid about it. Her hair, of a bluish black, contrasts strangely with her complexion, dead pale and greenish, on which her lips show so purple that they seem to be stained by some sanguine berry; her strange smile reveals teeth set in dark-red gums, and her fixed glance fascinates and repels. She looks like one of those Javanese women, vampires of love, diurnal succubæ, whose love exhausts in a fortnight the blood, the marrow, and the soul of a European. And yet she is a virgin, she is the doctor's daughter, and languishes

in solitude. Love seeks in vain to acclimatise itself in that atmosphere, out of which she herself could not live.

"I have never read the 'Flowers of Evil' of Charles Baudelaire without thinking involuntarily of this tale of Hawthorne's. His flowers also have sombre, metallic tints, verdigrised fronds, and intoxicating odours. His muse resembles the doctor's daughter, whom no poisons can harm and whose complexion, by its bloodless pallor, tells of the atmosphere in which she lives."

Baudelaire was pleased with this comparison, and he liked to see in it the personification of his talent. He also gloried in this remark of a great poet: "You have given to the heaven of art a strange, ghastly beam; you have created a new shudder." And yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that among his mandragoras and poppies and colchicums there is not to be met with here and there a blooming rose with innocuous perfume, some great Indian flower opening its white petals to the pure air of heaven. When Baudelaire depicts the ugly things of humanity and civilisation, it is with secret horror; he has no liking for them; he looks upon them as violations of the universal rhythm. When he was called immoral, — a big word which people in France know how to use nearly as well as people in America, — he was as

much surprised as if he had heard jessamine praised for its honesty, and bitter ranunculus stigmatised for its wickedness.

Besides Poe's tales, Baudelaire translated the same author's "Adventures of Allen Gordon Pym," which end with that fearful swallowing up in the whirlpool of the Antarctic Pole. He also put into French the cosmogonic dream called "Eureka," in which the American author, making use of the celestial mechanics of La Place, seeks to guess at the secret of the universe, and believes he has found it. How difficult was the translation of such a piece of work can be readily imagined.

Under the title of "The Artificial Paradise," Baudelaire summed up, at the same time introducing into it his own reflections, the work of De Quincey, the English opium-eater, and made of it a sort of treatise which must necessarily in several places be almost identical with Balzac's "Theory of Stimulants," which has remained unpublished. It forms most interesting reading, illumined as it is by phantasmagoria and the depicting of the most brilliant, the most curious, the most terrible hallucinations produced by this seductive poison, which stupefies China and the East with its fic-

titious bliss. The author blames the man who seeks to avoid inevitable pain and rises into an artificial paradise only to fall into a blacker hell.

Baudelaire was a most sagacious art critic, and he brought to the appreciation of painting a metaphysical subtlety and an originality in his point of view which make one regret that he did not devote more time to this sort of work. The pages which he wrote about Delacroix are most remarkable.

Towards the end of his life he wrote a few short poems in prose, but in rhythmic prose, wrought out and polished like the most concentrated poetry. They are strange fancies, landscapes of another world, unknown figures which you fancy you have seen elsewhere, spectral realities, phantoms possessed of terrible reality. These productions appeared somewhat at haphazard here and there, in various reviews, and it is much to be desired that they should be collected in book form, with the addition of any others which the author may have kept in his desk.

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE

BORN IN 1790 — DIED IN 1869

I DO not intend to write a biography of Lamartine, still less a detailed estimate of his work, but I do wish to bring that great figure out of the half shadow in which he enveloped himself for some years past in the solitude and silence of his later days, and to place it in the light which henceforth will never again desert it.

As a humble poet, enslaved to prose through the necessities of journalism, I shall try to pass judgment on a great poet. It is rash of me to do so, for my brow does not reach his feet, but statues are best appreciated from below. His deserves to be carved out of the finest Parian or Carrara marble, free from all spot or stain.

Lamartine has told himself, in a style which no one else can imitate, his earliest recollections of his childhood and his family; he has told of the opening of his young soul to life, to reverie, to thought, — immortal

confidences of genius which the public collects and in which it takes pleasure, for each can fancy that that voice, so intimate and penetrating, speaks to him alone as to an unknown friend. So I shall let Lamartine seek, through his reveries, his passions, his loves, his travels, in the course of a life apparently idle, the way which was to be followed, and which is not always easily made out amid the tangled minglings of human affections. No doubt all the generous sentiments which he was to express so admirably, — love, faith, the religious worship of nature, the longing for heaven, — were already surging within him; but the world as yet saw in him only a handsome youth, aristocratic, elegant, of perfect manners and destined to win success in drawing-rooms. He had twice travelled in Italy. At that time he said nothing of the impression which must have been produced upon him by the clear heavens, the sea bluer even than the sky, the vast prospects, the trees with shining, strong foliage, the ruins magnificent in their destruction, the vigorous, warm-coloured nature through which wandered like mute shadows inhabitants bowed under the yoke of servitude and under the greatness of their past. But the poetry of it all was slowly welling up within his

heart, the secret treasure was growing every day, and new pearls were being added to the mysterious casket which was to open later. If he rivalled Byron, to whom he dedicated an epistle equal to the finest passages of "Childe Harold," it was merely as a dandy.

Having returned to France, he allowed some years to pass by in that feverish yet fruitful idleness whence spring great works; and in 1820 appeared a modest volume for which he had some difficulty in finding a publisher. It was the "Meditations." This book was an event infrequent in the course of ages. It contained a whole new world, a world of poetry, more difficult perhaps to discover than America or the Atlantides. While he seemed to be coming and going with indifference among other men, Lamartine was travelling over unknown seas, his eye fixed upon his star, drawn towards a shore on which no one had yet stepped, and had returned victorious like Columbus, — he had discovered the soul.

It would be difficult to understand to-day, after so many revolutions, downfalls, and vicissitudes in human affairs, after seeing so many literary systems tried and forgotten, so much extravagance in thought and in language, the universal enthusiasm evoked by the "Medi-

tations." It was like a breath of freshness and of rejuvenation, like the fluttering of wings passing over souls. Young men and maidens and women carried their admiration to the point of worship; Lamartine's name was on every lip, and the Parisians, who are not poetic, after all, filled with madness like the Abderites who incessantly repeated the chorus of Euripides, "O Love, mighty Love," quoted, as they met, the stanzas of "The Lake." Never was there so great a success.

The fact is, Lamartine was not merely a poet, he was poetry itself. His chaste, elegant, noble language seemed to ignore wholly the ugly and mean side of life. As the book was, so was the author, and the best frontispiece which could have been selected for the volume of verse was the poet's own portrait; a lyre in his hands and on his shoulders a cloak blown about by the storm were in no wise ridiculous.

What deep, new accents, what ethereal aspirations, what upspringing towards the ideal, what effusions of love, what tender and melancholy notes, what sighs and questionings of the soul which no poet had yet caused to sound! In the pictures drawn by Lamartine, the heavens always occupy much space. He needs that space to move about easily, and to draw broad

circles around his thoughts. He floats, he flies, he soars; like the swan resting on its great, white wings, sometimes in the light, sometimes in a light haze, sometimes, too, in storm clouds, he rarely settles on the earth, and soon resumes his flight with the first breeze that ruffles his plumes. That fluid, transparent, aerial element which opens before him and closes behind him, is his natural road; he maintains himself in it without difficulty for many hours, and from his lofty heights he sees the landscape turn faint and blue, the waters shimmer and the buildings rise in vaporous effacement.

Lamartine is not one of those marvellous artist poets who hammer verse as if it were a blade of gold upon a steel anvil, making closer the grain of the metal and shaping it to sharp, accurate outlines. He ignores or disdains every excess of form, and with the negligence of the nobleman, who rimes only when minded, without restricting himself to technical matters, he writes admirable poems as he rides through the woods, as he floats in his boat along some shady bank, or leans on the window of one of his castles. His verse rolls on with harmonious murmur, like the waves of Italian or Greek waters, which bear on their transparent crests branches

of laurel, golden fruits fallen from the shore, and reflect the sky, the birds or the sails, or break on the strand in brilliant, silvery foam. Its full, sweeping, successive undulating forms, impossible to fix as water, reach their aim, and, fluid as they are, bear thoughts as the sea bears vessels, whether a frail skiff or a ship of the line.

There is a magic charm in that breathing verse, which swells and sinks like the breast of ocean; one is carried away by the melody, by the chorus of rimes, as by the distant song of sailors or sirens. Lamartine is probably the greatest magician in poetry.

His broad, vague manner of writing suits the exalted spirituality of his nature. The soul does not need to be carved like Greek marble. Lights and sounds, breathings, opaline tints, rainbow colours, blue moonlight-beams, diaphanous gauze, aerial draperies swelling and rising in the breeze, suffice to depict and envelop it. The Latin expression, *musæ ales*, seems to have been invented for Lamartine.

In that immortal poem, "The Lake," in which passion speaks a tongue which the finest music has never equalled, vaporous nature appears as through a silver gauze, distant, afar, painted with a few touches

so it shall serve as a framework and a background to that unforgettable remembrance; and yet everything is seen, the light in the heavens, the water and the rocks, the trees on the shore and the mountains on the horizon, and every wave that casts its foam upon the adored feet of Elvira.

And yet, because in Lamartine there is always a mist and a sound of the æolian harp, it is not to be taken for granted that he is merely a melodious lake poet, and can only sigh softly of melancholy and love. If he sighs, he can also speak and shout; he rules as easily as he charms; his angelic voice, which seems to issue from the depths of the heavens, can assume at need a virile accent.

At Naples, a marriage brought about by that admiration which attracts women to the poet of their dreams, made him happy and rich. A young lady, like those charming, romantic heroines of Shakespeare, who are attracted by a glance, and who are faithful unto death, brought him her love and a most princely fortune. France saw the phenomenon, rare in our country, of a poet who was not poor, and whose fancy could unfold itself splendidly in the full sunshine. People affect to believe that poverty, that lean, harsh nurse, is better for

genius than riches. It is a mistake. A poet's nature is prodigal, careless, generous; it loves luxury as the material expression of poesy; it loves to realise its caprices in its verse and in its life, to form for itself an environment from which shall be excluded every ugly, mean, prosaic thing. Mathematics are repugnant to it (Lamartine had a horror of them and looked upon them as obstacles to thought), and with a hand that never counts it draws from the three wells of Abul Khasim the dinars which it scatters around like a golden rain. Untroubled by any of those obstacles which wear out the strength of the greatest minds, Lamartine was enabled to give free course to his genius, to expand completely, and the chill of poverty did not wither its magnificent flowers.

After the "Meditations" came the "Harmonies," in which the poet's flight reaches to the greatest heights, — it seems to take him within the starry regions. There are in this volume poems of ineffable beauty and of grand melancholy. Never since the days of Job did the human soul utter, in the presence of the formidable mysteries of life and death, more desperate, heart-breaking plaints than in the "Novissima Verba."

The success of the "Harmonies" was immense, but

though the work was superior to its predecessor, its success could not surpass that of the "Meditations." Admiration had at once bestowed on Lamartine all that it can give to a man; it had exhausted in his favour its flowers and its censers; no additional beam could be put into the aureole of the poet, the splendour of his noonday could add nothing to the glory of his dawn.

Amid these sounds of triumph, Lamartine had started on his voyage to the Orient, not as a humble pilgrim with white staff in his hand, and scallops on shoulder, but with royal luxury, on a vessel chartered by himself, which bore for the emirs presents worthy of Haroun al Raschid; and once he landed, travelling with caravans of Arab horses that he had purchased, buying the houses in which he had slept, erecting in the desert tents as splendid as Solomon's pavilions of gold and purple. Lord Byron alone had made poetry travel so sumptuously. The tribes, amazed, hastened with acclamations along his way, and nothing would have been easier for the poet than to have had himself proclaimed Caliph. Lady Hester Stanhope, that illuminated Englishwoman who inhabited Lebanon, offered him the horse whose back in its outline resembles a sort of saddle and which

Hakim, the king of the Druses, is to ride in his next incarnation. She predicted to him that one day he would hold in his aristocratic hand the destinies of his country.

Through all this Lamartine passed on, tranquil, almost indifferent, like a high-bred lord whom nothing astonishes and who feels that all the homage paid him is his due. He accepted all the worship with a kindly smile, but without being intoxicated by it. It appeared quite natural to him that he should be handsome, elegant, rich, endowed with genius, and that he should excite admiration and love. But that almost superhuman happiness was not to last. The ancient Greeks believed in the existence of jealous divinities which they called Moiræ, the jealous eyes of which were hurt by the sight of the happiness which they enjoyed spoiling. It was to appease the Moiræ that Polycrates, too happy, cast into the sea his ring, which a fisherman brought back. No doubt one of these wicked deities met the poet on his triumphal tour and was shocked by his happiness and glory, by the union in him of so marvellous gifts. She stretched out her withered hand, and Julia, the lovely child, who was accompanying her father to those sunny lands in

which life seems to renew its energies, bowed her head like a flower touched by the ploughshare, and the vessel which had sailed with white wings, came back with black sails, bringing a bier.

The loss was irreparable, the despair was lasting, the wound one of those which can never close and which ever bleed. No doubt it was reserved to the two greatest poets of our day to feel that grief which cannot be consoled in order that they should pay for their glory.

The muse alone with its rhythms can soothe and sometimes lull that regret for the dear being lost for no apparent reason. Lamartine published his "Jocelyn," a tender and pure epic of the soul, in which are related, not the brilliant adventures of a hero, but the sufferings of a lowly, unknown heart; a delicate masterpiece full of feeling and of tears of Alpine whiteness, as pure as the snow of the highest peaks which no impure breath reaches, and where love, which is unaware of its own existence, so chaste is it, might form the subject of contemplation for angels. Never was a success more sympathetic, never was a book more eagerly read and more wetted with tears.

The "Angel's Fall" was not so well understood.

Magnificent passages rich in Oriental colour, which seemed to be leaves taken from the Bible, were but half successful, and that because of the strangeness of the subject, the singularity of the pictures drawn from a world anterior to our own, the excessive grandeur of personages greater than human nature; and further, I must confess, through increasing carelessness in composition and style.

After the publication of the "Poetic Recollections" with their long vibrations, last echoes of the "Meditations" and of the "Harmonies," the poet bade farewell to the muse and laid down his harp, never again to take it up. He was filled with the desire for a practical and active life. He had been attaché and life-guard, he now wished to be a deputy. People who think they are serious-minded because they are prosaic, unaware that poetry alone influences the soul and that imagination carries away the crowd, sneered as they saw the dreamer who was called "Elvira's poet," approach the tribune; but soon it was understood that he who can sing can also speak, and that the poet has a golden mouth. From his harmonious lips speeches came winged, vibrating, and possessing like the bee at once honey and a sting. Poetry is

easily transformed into eloquence; it has passion, warmth, thought, generous feeling, prophetic instinct, and — no matter what one may say to the contrary — that high, supreme reason which soars over everything and does not allow general truth to be troubled by accidental facts.

The Girondins brought about the Revolution, or at least, greatly helped it. Lamartine found himself in the presence of the billows which he had let loose, and which broke in foam and thunder at his feet, rolling on their angry crests the *débris* of the last monarchy; he accepted the mission to harangue the stormy sea, to reason with the tempest, to hold back the lightning within the clouds. It was a dangerous mission, which he accomplished like a nobleman and a hero. Then it was plainly seen that all poets were not like Horace, who fled from the battlefield, *non bene relicta parmula*. He had cast a spell upon ferocious instincts, and the tamed tumult roared under his balcony to make him come forth, to see him and hear him. As soon as he appeared, the crowd was silent, awaiting some noble words, some grave advice, some generous thought, and it withdrew satisfied, bearing away with it the seeds of harmony and of devotion to humanity.

The poet exposed himself to the bullet which might be shot by some too radical utopist or too backward a fanatic, with the high-bred disdain of the nobleman who despises death as being vulgar and common, — a superior sort of dandyism which middle-class people find it difficult to imitate. If he threw himself of his own free will into that abyss, it was because he had no interest whatever in it, and was sure to destroy himself. Then was seen a thing strange indeed in our modern civilisation, — a man playing in open day and in his own person the part of a moderating Tyrtæus, of an Orpheus, tamer of wild beasts, *doctus lenire tigres*, urging to well doing, calling away from evil, and stretching over disorder the thought of harmony and of beauty. Without a police, without an army, without any repressive means, he held in by pure poetry a whole excited people. He uttered in the presence of the extreme republicans these sublime words: "The tricolour flag has travelled around the world with our glory, the red flag has travelled around the Champ de Mars only." And the tricolour continued to wave triumphant in the breeze.

He spent his genius, his health, his fortune in this business with the most generous carelessness. He

made the greatest human effort that ever was tried; he stood alone against an unbridled multitude. For several days he it was who saved France and gave her time to await better times. And as nothing is so ungrateful as terror, once peril is past, he lost his popularity. Those who owed him their lives perhaps, their riches and their safety unquestionably, thought him ridiculous when, after having thrown to the winds for their benefit all his treasure, with the noble confidence of the poet who thinks he may ask for a drachma in return for a talent from those whom he had spellbound and preserved, he sat down on the threshold of his ruined home and, holding out his helmet, said, "*Date obolum Belisario.*" Debts were behind him, forcing him to hold out his hand.

He was certainly a great enough man to play with his creditors the scene between Don Juan and M. Dimanche, but he would not do it, and France beheld the sad spectacle of the poet growing old and bowed from dawn till night under the yoke of paying copy. The demigod who remembered heaven wrote novels, pamphlets, and articles like us. Pegasus cut his furrow, dragging a plough which, had he outstretched his wings, he could have carried away amid the stars.

ALFRED DE VIGNY

BORN IN 1799 — DIED IN 1863

COUNT ALFRED DE VIGNY was one of the most illustrious members of the Romanticist school, and although his reserved and refined nature led him to keep apart from the crowd, he did not fear to face it when the sacred doctrine was at stake. In spite of his dislike for the rough battles of the stage, he translated Shakespeare's "Othello" with courageous fidelity and braved the stormy pit. This translation, in which accuracy never turns into awkwardness, and which has all the freedom of an original work, has not remained in the repertory, and it was only after an interval of about thirty years that Rouvière brought out again and performed "The Moor of Venice" upon a Boulevard stage. The preface, which is a masterpiece of grace, wit, and irony, is full of ideas new at that time and still new to-day.

Few writers have realised the ideal of a poet as fully as Alfred de Vigny. Of noble birth, bearing a name as

melodious as the sound of the lyre, of seraphic beauty, which even in his later age suffering alone could diminish, rich enough not to be driven by vulgar necessity to wretched labours day by day, he preserved his pure, calm, and poetic literary physiognomy. He was indeed the poet of Eloa, the virgin born of a tear of Christ, who came down, drawn by pity, to console Lucifer. This poem, which is perhaps the most beautiful and the most perfect in the French language, could have been written by no one but de Vigny, even amid all that company of great poets who shone in the heaven of letters; he alone knew the secret of those pearly grays, of those soft reflections, of that blue moonlight, which make the immaterial visible against the white background of the divine light. But the men of to-day appear to have forgotten "Eloa;" it is rarely spoken of or quoted, though a priceless gem set in the golden gates of the tabernacle. "Symeta," "Dolorida," "The Horn," "The Sérieuse Frigate," exhibit in every part exquisite concordance between form and thought; they are priceless flagons holding concentrated essences the perfume of which never dies.

Like all the artists of the new school, Alfred de Vigny wrote as well in prose as in verse. He gave us

"Cinq-Mars," the novel which in our literature comes closest to Walter Scott's work; "Stello," "Military Grandeur and Servitude," in which is "The Red Seal," a masterpiece of description, interest, and feeling which it is impossible to read without tears springing to one's eyes; "Chatterton," his great success; "The Maréchale d'Ancre," a drama which proved to be a semi-failure; "Getting off with a Fright," a delightful pastel; and a translation of "The Merchant of Venice," which ought to be performed as a homage to his memory in these days of ours, when masterpieces are none too numerous.

Never did poetry have a more ardent defender than de Vigny, and although Sainte-Beuve did say of him, very kindly and with admiration, when speaking of the battles of the Romanticist school, "De Vigny, more reserved, before noon returned within his ivory tower," yet from the depths of his retreat he maintained the sacred rights of thought against the oppression of material things; he loudly claimed, though he possessed both, leisure and bread for the poet. That was his fixed idea. He developed it in every possible aspect in "Stello" and in "Chatterton"; he bestowed upon it the dazzling consecration of the drama. He rightly

looks upon the poet as the pariah of modern civilisation, driven out during his lifetime and stripped after his death, for he alone cannot bequeath to posterity the fruit of his work.

When we think of de Vigny, we involuntarily imagine him like a swan, moving along, his head somewhat bent back, his wings half filled with the breeze, floating upon those transparent waters of English parks, a Virginia water rayed with a moonbeam that filters through the dull green of the foliage of the willows. He is the white light in a beam, a silver streak on a limpid mirror, a sigh amid water flowers and pale foliage. He may also be compared to one of the nebulous milky drops on the blue bosom of the heaven, which shine less than other stars because they are placed higher and farther away.

CHATTERTON

DECEMBER, 1857

ONE of the deep impressions of my youth was made upon me by the first performance of "Chatterton," which took place, as every one knows, on February 12, 1835. So the other evening, when I was going to the Théâtre-Français, I felt a certain uneasiness, in no wise caused, I hasten to say, by the talent of Alfred de Vigny, — I was uncertain about myself. Would I feel again the emotions of my youth, the artless and trustful enthusiasm, the perfect consonance with the work, all the feelings which then animated me? When age has come, as a great poet has said, one must avoid coming across the opinions or the women one loved at twenty. My admiration, however, was more fortunate.

When "Chatterton" was first performed, it was even more distinct from the general run of plays than it is to-day. That was the heyday of the historical, Shakespearean drama, filled with incidents, crowded

with characters, bedizened with local colour, full of fire and fury. Buffoonery and lyric poetry rubbed elbows in it in accordance with the prescribed formula. The cap and bells of the court jester were heard in it, and the good Toledo blade, so much ridiculed since then, thrust and carved all the time. In "Chatterton" the drama is intimate; it is merely the exposition of an idea. There are no facts, there is no action, save perchance the suicide of the poet which is anticipated from the first word, so it was not supposed that the work could possibly succeed on the stage; and yet, in spite of the previsions of experts, its success was maintained. Youth in those days was intoxicated with art, passion, and poetry. All heads were turned, all hearts were beating high with boundless emotion, the fate of Icarus affrighted no one. "Wings! wings! wings!" was the cry heard on all hands; "wings! even if we must fall into the sea. To fall from heaven, one must have risen there, even were it but for a second, and that is nobler than to crawl all one's life upon earth." Such exaltation may seem absurd to the generation which is now as old as we were then, but it was sincere, and many proved it over whom the grass has grown thick and green for many a day. The pit be-

fore which Chatterton declaimed his lines was full of wan, long-haired youths, firmly convinced that there was no other decent occupation on earth than writing verse or painting, — art, as they then said, — and who looked down upon the *bourgeois* with a contempt which that of the Heidelberg or Jena students for the Philistines scarcely approaches. The *bourgeois*, — why, they included pretty nearly everybody: bankers, stockbrokers, lawyers, merchants, shop-keepers, and others; whoever, in a word, did not form part of the mystic circle, but prosaically earned his living. Never did such a thirst for glory burn human lips. As for money, no one gave it a thought. More than one in those days, as in that enumeration of impossible professions which Théodore de Banville relates with such irony, — more than one might have exclaimed, with perfect truth, "I am a lyric poet and I live by my profession." Whoever has not lived during that mad, hot, over-excited, but generous time cannot imagine to what an extent the forgetfulness of material life, the intoxication, or, if you will, the infatuation of art carried obscure and frail victims, who preferred to die of it rather than to give up their dream. In vain did men hear during the night the report of solitary pistols.

You may judge, then, of the effect produced upon such people by the "Chatterton" of Alfred de Vigny, which, to be understood, must be replaced in the atmosphere of the time at which it was written.

The noble author, whose personal means always kept him free from such troubles, was always greatly interested in the fate of poets in our society. He developed his views at great length in "Stello, or The Consultations of the Black Doctor," of which "Chatterton" is but an episode worked over for the stage. His eager sympathy, his feminine sensibility, his warmth of pity make Alfred de Vigny understand and share the sufferings of delicate souls, hurt by brutal contact with reality. He claims for them life and reverie, — in other words, bread and leisure. As one listens to him every one agrees with him, so eloquent is he. And yet who shall judge whether the poet is truly a poet, and whether society ought to maintain him in leisure before inspiration has come to him from heaven? Are we to believe in the affirmations of pride, the advice of critics, or popular renown? For, once he has attained renown, the writer no longer needs help.

I do not think that any one ever lived absolutely on poetry save those who died of it. Poetry is not a

permanent state of the soul; the god visits the best endowed men but from time to time; the will has little or no action upon it. Alone among art workers, the poet cannot be laborious, for his work does not depend upon himself. No one, — I say it without fear of being contradicted even by the most illustrious, — no one is certain of having finished by evening the poem which he began in the morning, even if it contains but a few stanzas. He must remain bent over his desk, waiting until from the confused swarm of rimes one detaches itself and alights on his pen; or else he must rise and pursue in woods and streets the thought which escapes him. Verse is made of reverie, time, and chance, of a tear or a smile, a perfume or a remembrance. A stanza, forgotten in a corner of the memory like a larva in its cocoon, suddenly wakens and flies off with a rustling of wings; its time to bloom has come. In the midst of a very different occupation or of a serious conversation, invisible lips whisper in your ear the word that you lack, and the ode, suspended for months, is now finished. How can such work be appreciated, and especially how can it be remunerated? The idea of a man exclusively a poet, of a poet living on his work, cannot therefore be maintained. Because

some poems have been highly remunerated, it is not to be inferred that their authors could always have paid their way with that single resource. It is an accident, quite a modern one, due to reasons which it would not be difficult to state, and which have no bearing upon pure poetry.

I am aware that Alfred de Vigny does not present "Chatterton" as a generalisation, but as a painful exception. That unhappy youth could never have resigned himself to live; even had he never lacked for bread, he would have wrapped himself and died in his solitary pride. When the curtain, on rising, showed us the stage-setting somewhat faded by time, with its brown wainscoting, its greenish windows, and the wooden stairs, down which poor Kitty Bell falls at the close of the play, I looked in vain for Joanny upon the Quaker's chair, and on the other side for poor Madame Dorval. Geffroy alone stood in the centre of the stage, pale, dressed in black, grown older like everybody by some twenty-two years, which is perhaps a good deal for the poet who is only eighteen, but preserving the true spirit of the time, the deep meaning of the work, the bitter, romantic, and fatal aspect which delighted men in 1835.

The first part of the play seemed somewhat cold, especially to the spectators of the present generation, whose interests are so different from those of the men of former days. John Bell, accurate, positive, righteous according to law, with his practical and well-nigh irrefutable reasons, formerly excited violent antipathy; he was hated like the melodrama traitor, covered with the blackest of crimes; and when, like a commercial Bluebeard, he called upon his wife to account for a few pounds not entered upon the books, a shudder ran through the theatre. People dreaded to see him behead the trembling Kitty Bell with the edge of a flat ruler. Many a young, romantic woman, with pale complexion and long English curls, turned her eyes in melancholy fashion upon her husband, the classic husband, well fed and rosy, as if to draw attention to the parallel. Now John Bell, who objects to his machines being broken, and who affirms that a man is bound to pay by assiduous work for his share of the banquet of life or leave the table if he has no money, as rigorous to others as he has been to himself, strikes us as the one reasonable character in the play.

The Quaker, notwithstanding his excellent intentions, talks very childishly, and gives the impression,

as he sits on his chair, of a patriarch in his dotage. Kitty Bell loves chastely the penniless youth who only writes verses and walks about with gestures and declaiming verses, who is lean under his thin, worn, black coat. Not a woman understands her now, and most young girls think her absurd, for the modern maiden's ideal hero alights from a coupé, wears neat boots, suède gloves, has a cigar in his mouth, and in his pocket a purse stuffed with bank-notes and gold. In 1835 it seemed quite natural to fall in love with Chatterton, but how are we to-day to take any interest in an individual who has neither capital, income, houses nor real estate? — a man who will not even accept a position, because, forsooth, he has written "The Battle of Hastings," made up of imitations of the old Anglo-Saxon chronicles; and especially because he is a man of genius? The Lord Mayor and the young noblemen in their scarlet coats strike us now as very good-natured to take so much trouble about that surly maniac, and to keep on seeking him out with so much persistency. People do not take so much trouble nowadays, and lords do not climb the stairs of garrets where poets, nowadays at least, starve to death at leisure if such is their good pleasure; for

once a man ceases to be a poet, he ought to say so; life again becomes possible.

Nevertheless, the slowly elaborated emotion was at last attained, when was seen the bare, cold room, scarce lighted by a dying lamp, and into which the moon shone through the dirty panes with its white gleam and its dead face, the sad and sole companion of an agonising soul, the weakening inspirer of unfinished, hopeless work. The narrow bed, resembling a coffin more than a bed and better fitted for a body than for a living frame, on the side of which Chatterton seeks to force his virgin thought to sell itself for gold as does a courtesan, produced a sinister effect. More than one writer in that theatre recognised in it the representation, exaggerated no doubt but true at bottom, of his own weariness, his own intellectual struggle, his own moments of despair. Doubtless it is hard when Chimera smiles upon you with her languorously perfidious smile, caresses you with eyes whose strange gleams promise love, happiness, and glory, brushes your brow with its wings as it flies off into the infinite, and lets you familiarly place your hand upon its lion's quarters, — it is hard to let her fly away alone, annoyed and contemptuous like a woman whose confession has

not been understood, and to have thereafter to harness one's self to the heavy drag of a piece of work ordered beforehand. But what are you going to do about it? Cling to some duty, to some love, to some devotion, transform the price paid for that task-work into security, comfort, happiness for loved ones, and graciously sacrifice your pride on the altar of domestic life. Well, in that case, you will be neither Homer nor Dante nor Shakespeare, even had you been one of them if you had only written verse. The worst of it is that Pegasus, as may be seen in Schiller's ballad, is never, even when he condescends, a very good horse for the plough. He cuts some straight furrows and then he is off, he opens his great wings, breaks his traces, or if he cannot do so, carries off with him the ploughman and the plough, which he may let fall by and by, broken and shattered. The truth is that poetry is a fatal gift, a sort of curse to him who has received it at his birth. A great fortune even does not always prevent a poet from being unhappy. Byron's example is sufficient proof of this.

The close of the play moved the spectators as deeply as at the original performances. The purest and most violent passion fills it from end to end. Now it is no

longer a question of literature or poetry. As soon as Chatterton has made up his mind to die, he becomes a man again and ceases to be an abstraction; the drama passes from the brain into the heart; suppressed love breaks forth. Death is the third character in this supreme interview, and when Chatterton's lips touch the immaculate brow of Kitty Bell, that last kiss tells the poor woman that the wretched youth is about to die. John Bell may call as loudly as he pleases, the timid creature will not reply, but from the threshold of the death room will pitch down the stairs and fall upon her knees, hiding her innocently guilty head between the tear-wet leaves of her Bible.

The character of Kitty Bell, the angelic Puritan, the earthly sister of Eloa, is drawn with almost ideal purity. How chaste is her love, how concealed and contained her passion, how deep her modesty. Scarcely is her secret betrayed by a despairing sob, at the last moment. Every one knows that the part was one of the greatest successes of Madame Dorval; never perhaps did that superb actress rise so high. She played it with timid English grace; she managed in most motherly fashion the two babes, pure intermediaries of unconfessed love; she displayed the sweetest

feminine charity towards the forsaken youth of genius rebelling against fate; she sought with light touch to soothe the wounds of his suffering pride. She addressed to him the very beating of her heart, the very caresses of her soul, in the slow words she spoke to him, her eyes cast down, her hands resting on the heads of her two dear little ones as if to seek strength against herself. And what an agonising cry she uttered, what forgetfulness of herself she exhibited when she rolled, struck down by grief, down the steps which she had climbed with convulsive effort, with almost mad jerks, well-nigh on her knees, her feet caught in her dress, her arms outstretched, her soul projected out of the body which could not follow it!

Ah! if Chatterton had for the last time opened his eyes weighed down by opium and seen that dreadful grief, he would have died happy, sure that he had been loved as no one ever was, and that he would not long await in another world the soul which was kin to his own.

PAUL DE KOCK

BORN IN 1794 — DIED IN 1870

THERE is nothing new but what has been forgotten, and probably no one among the younger generation of to-day has any idea of the great reputation which Paul de Kock enjoyed some thirty or forty years ago. There never was an author more popular in the real meaning of the word. He was read by everybody, by the statesman as well as by the commercial traveller and the schoolboy, by the great ladies in society and by the *grisettes*. He was as famous abroad as at home, and Russians studied Parisian manners in the pages of his novels. The Romanticist school, with its lofty, chivalrous sentiments, its lyrical outbursts, its love for the Middle Ages and local colour, its exaggerated idea of passion, its wealth of Shakespearean metaphors, caused this modest glory to pale and extinguished its beams with its own dazzling splendour.

Paul de Kock, to his credit be it said, was a true *bourgeois*, a Philistine of the Marais, utterly devoid of feeling for poetry or style. He had never been a student, and had not the faintest idea of æsthetics; indeed, he would readily have supposed, like Pradon, that they were some chemical substance. He was wholly devoid of the artistic temperament,—I do not say this with any ironical intention; I mean that he possessed the *qualities* which are necessary to a man who is to become popular with the masses. Paul de Kock had the advantage of being absolutely like his readers. He shared their ideas, their opinions, their prejudices, their feelings. He possessed, however, a special gift, that of exciting laughter; not the Attic laughter, but the loud, coarse laugh, absurdly irresistible, which makes, as the saying is, people split their sides. Paul de Kock called out that laugh by comic situations in doubtful taste, ridiculous, unexpected happenings, grotesque amusements, the breaking of crockery, the splashing of gravy, by kicks and boxes on the ear which always went to the wrong person, and other unfailing clownish tricks. It is true that his work is coarsely done, lacks wit, and is heavy in its outlines; but his fanciful characters, which tumble one

over another like cardboard figures, possess a force and truthfulness and a touch of nature which must be acknowledged.

Now Paul de Kock has become an historical author. His works contain the description of manners in a civilisation differing as greatly from our own as does that the traces of which are found in Pompeii; his novels, which people read formerly for amusement's sake, will henceforth be consulted by erudites desirous of recreating life in that old Paris which I knew in my youth and of which the vestiges will soon have vanished.

Those who were born after the Revolution of February 24, 1848, or shortly before that date, cannot understand the Paris in which the heroes and heroines of Paul de Kock moved, lived, and had their being. It was so utterly unlike the present Paris that sometimes I ask myself, as I gaze upon the broad streets, the long boulevards, the vast squares, the endless lines of monumental houses, the splendid quarters which have been built upon old market-gardens, if that is indeed the city in which my childhood was passed.

Paris, which is becoming the metropolis of the world, was then only the capital of France. Frenchmen, and even Parisians, were to be met on its streets.

Of course, foreigners came to it, as they have always done, for pleasure or instruction, but means of communication were difficult, the ideal of rapidity did not go beyond the classical stage-coach, and the locomotive steam-engine was not even visible as a chimera within the mists of the future; so that the general appearance of the population was not markedly modified.

The inhabitants of the provinces remained at home much more than they do now, they troubled Paris only when called to it by urgent business. You could hear French spoken on the Boulevard, which was then called Boulevard de Gand, and which now bears the name of Boulevard des Italiens. You could meet frequently with a type which is now becoming rare, and which for us is the true Parisian type: fair skin, rosy cheeks, brown hair, light-gray eyes, short stature, but a good figure, and in women a delicate plumpness and small bones. Olive complexions and black hair were rare at that time; the South had not yet invaded Paris, bringing with it its complexion of passionate paleness, its brilliant eyes, and its mad gesticulations. The general appearance of faces then was rosy and smiling, with a look of health and good-humour; the complexions which nowadays are con-

sidered distinguished would at that time have suggested illness.

The city was, relatively speaking, very small, — that is, business was restricted within certain limits beyond which people rarely went. The plaster elephant, in which Gavroche used to take refuge, then rose gigantic behind the Place de la Bastille, and seemed to forbid people to walk farther. The Champs-Élysées became, as soon as night fell, as dangerous as the plain of Marathon; the boldest would stop at the Place de la Concorde. The quarter of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette then consisted merely of waste ground and fenced-in spaces. The church itself was not built, and from the Boulevard could be seen the Hill of Montmartre, with its wind-mills and the long arms of the semaphore on the top of the old tower. The Faubourg Saint-Germain went to bed early, and only on rare occasions did a student riot, provoked by a play at the Odéon, disturb its tranquil solitude. Trips from one quarter to another were less frequent. Omnibuses were not in existence, and there were marked differences in aspect, dress, and accent between the inhabitants of the Rue du Temple and those of the Rue Montmartre. The sewer in the Vieille Rue du Tem-

ple was only half covered in; the walls of the boulevard remained along almost its entire length, with streets lower down leading out on the site of the old moats. Great woodyards, the piles of lumber in which formed symmetrical designs, lay at the end of the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, and farther away, through the blue haze in the distance, showed the hill of Ménilmontant. At this point in the Boulevard rose the restaurant of la Galiotte, which was the scene of so many a joyous meal and so many a pleasant party. Farther on, at the corner of the Rue Charlot and close to the Turkish Garden, was the Cadran Bleu, dear to Paul de Kock and famous for its beautiful oyster-woman in her red drugget dress, her great pearl oyster-shells in her ears, and her innumerable necklaces. For those were the days of beautiful oyster-women, of pretty lemonade vendors, of beautiful *charcutières*. The Turkish Garden, with its Moorish arch, its ostrich-eggs, and its coloured windows, gave the impression of the most splendid Oriental magnificence, and people entered it with a sort of respectful awe, as if they expected to see His Highness face to face. On the opposite side of the Boulevard rose the theatres in which dramas and pan-

tomimes were performed, the Café de l'Épi-Scié, the sign of which represented a harvester sawing an ear of corn, and the mechanical show by M. Pierre, where we first learned something of the navy.

Over all that Boulevard, Paul de Kock reigns as a master. He knows all the *bourgeois* who pass by, as well as their wives and their daughters; he knows what they are thinking of, and the traditional jokes which they will perpetrate this evening while playing at loto; but it does not make him indignant; he enjoys them, he laughs at them heartily. Their courageous stupidity is pleasant to him. If these good people arrange to go picnicking next Sunday, he will take care to be invited, and will bring as his contribution a pasty or a melon. While eating dinner on the grass, no one will talk more nonsense than he, and no one at dessert will sing a more risky song. It is a coarse sort of enjoyment, no doubt, due to poor wine and ham, but honest, after all, for the whole family is there, and the girls who are kissed, and whose gingham dresses, made by themselves, are somewhat rumpled, know very well that their lovers will ere long become their husbands.

At that time, there were to be found all around Paris, numberless pastoral places, — at least, which appeared

pastoral to poor devils who had worked all the week in the darkness of a shop; little groves of trees, admirably fitted to shade a tavern, fishers' huts laved by the stream, in which a stew of small fry passed muster as gudgeon; arbours of Virginia creeper and hops, which at need served an amourous couple, as the cave served Æneas and Dido; Romainville, the Park of Saint-Fargeau, the Prés-Saint-Gervais, with their clumps of lilac and their fountain, the water of which filled up a small stone basin which was reached by a few steps. This sort of landscape was sufficient for Paul de Kock, who, as a matter of fact, is neither a picturesque writer nor a writer of descriptions after the fashion of the day. He thought it charming just as it was, and the wretched sward, diapered with greasy paper more than with daisies, represented the country to him; he sketched it in passing as a sort of background to his figures; but at bottom he did not understand much of what is now called nature, and in this respect he was truly French and truly Parisian.

But he did not always confine his walks to the suburbs, he sometimes went as far as Montmorenci, and then what splendid rides on asses' back through the forest; what shouts, what laughter, and what lucky

tumbles on the sward! And what delightful meals of brown bread and cherries! True, the participants were only clerks and shopgirls, but they were surely just as good as the modern dandies and fast women, even if one does not care to praise past times at the expense of the present, — a defect of those who were young under the former king. Unquestionably the *grisettes* of Paul de Kock are not as elegant as Alfred de Musset's "Mimi Pinson," but they are blooming, bright, jolly, kind-hearted girls, and as pretty, with their percale caps or their light straw hats, as the faces covered with rouge and powder for the sake of which well-bred young men ruin themselves nowadays. They earned their own scanty living, careless as the birds which perch upon the gutters of the roofs, but their love was not for sale and their hearts had first to be won. That charming race of girls has vanished, with many other good things of old Paris, which now survive only in the novels of old Paul de Kock, whose name will live long after that of some celebrities of the time, for he represents faithfully and with much spirit a wholly vanished epoch. How disdainful is the astonishment with which people now look upon his fast-living men who spent ten thousand a year, had a

cabriolet, — in those days there were cabriolets, — drank champagne in mad orgies, and kept a ballet dancer of the Gaîté or the Ambigu-Comique; and how contemptuously, no doubt, people now look upon those stag luncheons consisting of a couple of dozen oysters, radishes, and fresh-pork cutlets surrounded with green slices of cucumber, which the butchers formerly sold ready prepared, with, for wine, a bottle or two of Chablis; and yet people enjoyed them. But we have become more refined nowadays, and such pleasures are no longer sufficient for the present generation. In order to amuse itself, it has to pay, and to pay very dear. It is quite welcome to that. The former somewhat gross, but very natural joy appears to people nowadays bad form. They prefer jokes in slang borrowed from the dictionaries, and the epileptic insanities of the libretto of the Bouffes.

I the more willingly pay this late tribute to Paul de Kock that, when formerly bearing a pennant in the Romanticist army, I did not perhaps read his novels with the attention they deserved. Besides, the things he depicted were then present to us and their meaning did not stand out clearly. Nevertheless, I felt there was in him a sort of comic power which others lacked.

Now he appears to me in a more serious light, I will even say a melancholy light, if such a word is applicable to Paul de Kock. Some of his novels have the same effect upon me as Fenimore Cooper's "Last of the Mohicans"; I seem to read in them the story of the last of the Parisians, invaded and submerged by American civilisation.

JULES DE GONCOURT

BORN IN 1830 — DIED IN 1870

SO it is divided at last, — that double personality which was familiarly called the Goncourts, for no one ever separated one brother from the other. Those who knew intimately these two charming souls united in a single pearl, like two drops of water that have run together, were haunted by a disquieting, ever recurring, terrifying thought. It was: "Of those two brothers one will die first; the natural course of events makes it certain, unless a happy, blessed catastrophe strikes them down together at one and the same time." But heaven does not often bestow such blessings. The thought gnawed at my heart, and I scarce dared to dwell on the dread despair which would be the consequence of such a separation. The little bit of selfishness which is always to be found even in the most disinterested of human friendships made me repeat to myself, "I shall never see that day. As I am older, I shall have been dead for many a

year." But it was not to be so. That day, as the funeral hymn says, has come; I was there, and never did a sadder sight strike my eyes. Edmond, in his tragic grief, seemed like a petrified spectre, and death, which usually sets a mark of serene beauty on the face which it touches, had been unable to efface from the features of Jules, even and regular though they were, an expression of bitter grief and of inconsolable regret. It seemed as though he had felt at the last moment that he had no right to die like any one else, and that in doing so he was almost committing fratricide. The dead in his bier mourned for the living, unquestionably the more to be pitied of the pair.

I followed at every station of the *via crucis* poor Edmond, who, blinded by tears and supported by his friends, stumbled at every step as if his feet caught in his brother's shroud. Like people condemned to death, whose face is strangely altered on the way from the prison to the scaffold, Edmond, between Auteuil and the cemetery at Montmartre, had grown twenty years older, his hair had plainly turned white. This is no illusion of mine, several of those present noticed it turning whiter and losing its colour the nearer we approached the fatal spot and the little low door where

the last farewell must be spoken. It was lamentable and sinister, and never was a funeral procession so desolate; every one wept or sobbed convulsively; and yet those who walked behind that bier were philosophers, artists, writers, tried in grief, lords of their souls, masters of their nerves, and ashamed to betray emotion.

The coffin having been lowered into the narrow family vault where but one place is left, and the last farewell addressed to the friend who was starting on his first march towards that bourne whence no traveller returns, one of the relatives led Edmond away and we returned to the city in small groups, talking of the dead and of the survivor. Then we parted with a pressure of the hand, the firmer that it was inspired by the thought that it was perhaps the last one.

And now I must speak of the writer, though I have scarcely strength to do so. That worn face of the brother, which seemed lighted by a light from the other world, and looked, under the brilliant sunshine, like moonlight in broad day, rises before me like a real phantom, and I cannot put it aside. Since their mother's death, which happened in 1848, they had never been apart for an hour, and they had so thoroughly got into the habit of this common life that it

was a great event to see one of the Goncourts alone; the other was certainly not very far off.

Yet they were not twins. There was an interval of ten years between Edmond and Jules. The elder was dark, the younger fair, the elder taller than the other; their faces even were not alike; but one felt that a single soul dwelt in these two bodies; they were one person in two volumes. The moral likeness was so great that it made one forget physical unlikeness. How often I have mistaken Jules for Edmond, and continued with the one brother a conversation I had begun with the other! There was nothing to warn you that the person you were speaking to was different. Whichever of the two brothers happened to be there took up, without the least hesitation, the talk at the point where the other had left it. They had sacrificed their personality to each other and formed but a single one, which was called "the Goncourts" by friends, and "the Messieurs Goncourt" by those who did not know them. All their letters were signed "Edmond and Jules." During the ten years that I was intimately acquainted with them, I have received but a single note which was not signed by this sweet firm-name; — it is the one in which the unhappy survivor

told me, from the depths of his despair, of the death of his beloved brother. How much that widowed signature, testifying to his eternal loss, must have cost his trembling hand!

Although it is very difficult to believe it of literary men, yet nevertheless it is true that they had but one self-love. They never betrayed the secret of their partnership in labour; neither of them tried to obtain the glory for himself, and that single work produced by two brains still remains a mystery which no one has penetrated. I myself, their friend, who am trying here under these sad circumstances to say what was the dead man's share, — cannot do it; and besides, it seems to me almost impious to endeavour to separate what these two souls, one of which has now flown away, wished to unite indissolubly. Why should we untie this well plaited tress, the many-coloured threads of which are tressed in and out at regular intervals without knowing whence they came? I should fear to wound the brotherly delicacy which desired but a single reputation for the work done by the pair in common.

As I have already said, Jules de Goncourt was the younger of the two brothers. He was scarcely thirty-

four, and he appeared younger still, thanks to his fair complexion, to his silky, golden hair, and the light, pale, golden moustache which showed on the corners of his richly coloured lips. He was always carefully shaved and correctly dressed like a gentleman. Energetic black eyes marked his fine, sweet face. Generally he was brighter and gayer than his brother; the one was the smile of the other, but you had to know both very well to notice this slight difference. They never took each other's arm when walking; the younger preceded his brother by a few steps with a sort of juvenile petulance to which the elder gently yielded. Edmond had been the literary initiator of Jules, but all difference of style between himself and his pupil had long since disappeared. They thought and worked together, according to a plan which was no doubt settled beforehand, handing to each other across the table what they had written and summing it up in a final version. They were curious, refined men, with a horror of the commonplace and of ready-made phrases. To avoid the common they would have gone to excess, even to paroxysm, even to the length of making their expressions burst like soap bubbles over-filled with air. But then, how carefully they polished their style!

How exquisitely refined it was! what a delicate and novel choice of words! When they wrote history, they were not satisfied with the documents which were to be easily found, printed in books; they referred to original documents, to autographs, to unknown pamphlets, to secret memoirs, to paintings, engravings, fashion plates, to whatever might reveal a characteristic detail and revive the appearance of the times. Yet they were not novelists eager to load their palette with local colour. These two fashionable Benedictines worked in their dainty apartments of the rue Saint-George, filled with pretty bric-à-brac of the eighteenth century, as seriously as if they had been shut up within a monastery. They were scrupulously accurate. Every peculiarity which they mention is backed up by authentic proof. The masters of history and criticism, Michelet and Sainte-Beuve, quote them as authorities on everything that concerned the reign of Louis XVI, the Revolution, and the Directory, which they know thoroughly and every detail of which they are acquainted with. In the novel they attempted to reproduce, with implacable minuteness and clear-sightedness, reality, which they stretched out upon their table like an anatomical subject, with a pen as sharp as a dis-

secting-knife. It suffices to name "Sister Philomène," "Germinie Lacerteux," "Manette Salomon," "Renée Mauperin," in which occurs that new and living type of the noisy young girl, and their last work, "Madam Gervaisais," in which the study of a soul slowly absorbed by Catholicism is mingled with magnificent descriptions of Rome, wrought out like the etchings of Piranesi. With audacious originality they also tried their hand at drama. "Henriette Maréchal" failed to please Master Briar-pipe, the student in his twentieth year, which is a pity, for that undeserved check turned away from the stage two vocations which gave good promise. Besides these works the Goncourts produced interesting studies on Watteau, Chardin, Fragonard, Saint-Aubin, Gravelot, Eisen, and all the lesser masters of the eighteenth century, whom they knew so well, accompanied by plates which Jules engraved in *aqua fortis*. It is impossible to reproduce better the character of the art of an epoch unjustly disdained. They understood equally well the art of Japan, so true and so fanciful, so fertile in its invention of monstrosities, so astonishingly natural, and they wrote upon it with exquisite fancy. Let me not forget a book called "Ideas and Sensations," which gives the lyric and

dreamy side of their talent, and which takes the place, in their work, of the volume of verse which they did not write. It abounds in charming bits, it is full of wit, it is deep at times, and has descriptive passages of the greatest novelty. Did I not fear that my meaning would be misinterpreted, I would say that it contains exquisite symphonies of words. Words! Joubert estimates them at their real value, and compares them to precious stones which are set within the verse like diamonds in gold. They have their own beauty, known to poets and delicate artists alone.

When an author is spoken of, the titles of his books come up in a mass and take up all the room. But what did Jules die of? I shall be asked. He died of his profession, as we shall all die; he died of perpetual tension of the mind, of effort without rest, of struggle with difficulties created at will; of the fatigue of rolling that rock called the phrase, which is heavier than that of Sisyphus. To anæmia add nervousness, that wholly modern malady which comes from the overexcitement of civilised life, and which medicine is powerless to relieve, for it cannot reach the soul. You become irritable, the least noise worries you; you seek, but too late, silent repose in the shady woods; you fit

up a house. "The house finished, death enters," as the Turkish proverb says. Is that all? No, perhaps there was behind all this some secret grief. Jules de Goncourt, appreciated, praised, lauded by the masters of the intellect, lacked — what? The praise of fools. The vulgar is despised and kept at a distance, but if it accepts the sentence and stays away, the proudest natures grieve and pine away.

JULES JANIN

HE has been but recently admitted to the Academy; by rights, he should have been elected to it twenty years ago.

The man who since 1830 has every week put his initials, "J. J.," in the corner of the *Journal des Débats* owes to the *feuilleton* the best part of his glory, and for the first time a *feuilleton* writer sits down in the Academic arm-chair. Who is amazed and delighted at such an honour? It is J. J. For he is modest, and the little green embroidery upon his coat fulfils all his desires, — *hoc erat in votis*, shall I say, in one of those Latin quotations which he is so fond of? It is the legitimate and touching ambition of a writer to whom literature has always been an end, and not a means of reaching something else. He has fully deserved the palm branches on his sleeves and his collar; he was kept waiting for them too long, but at last he has them and we congratulate him upon the fact. When a man is neither a prince nor a duke, a

bishop nor a monk, a minister, a great lawyer, or a politician, not even a man of the world, but simply a literary man, it is as difficult for him to enter the French Academy as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

At last the *feuilleton* writer is installed under the cupola of the Mazarin palace. For my part, I am glad of it, for it is a victory and a triumph of which the Monday brethren have a right to be proud. "It is not every one who can paint like Boucher," used to say David, that severe painter, on hearing that facile artist run down by impotent disdain. Writing *feuilletons* is not much, — that is easily said, and thereupon the speaker shakes his head with a lofty air. But I should like to see attempt it — not for life, *di talem avertite casum!* five years would be enough — the grave, the serious, the difficult, the sober, the solemn, the learned, all the makers of compact weariness, the ornaments of reviews which one would rather admire than read; the fruitless ones who glory in their sterility and call their retention of style merit.

Of course it is easy to write a dramatic article, to improvise every week four or five hundred lines upon the most diverse and unexpected subjects; and brilliant

lines full of images, with endless wit scattered through them, such as a critic advised a gentleman to put into his somewhat weak fifth act; lines rapid in their correction and sure in their impetuous flow, full of those happy hits which are not to be found again by looking for them, by turns ironical and enthusiastic, mingling with the thought of others the fancy of the individual writer! To do this sort of work well, a man must be possessed. And therefore in this age, which abounds in poets, historians, novelists, and dramatists, great writers of articles are much rarer. I can count up as many as three.

Now that sort of article was invented by Janin. Before him Geoffroy, Hoffmann, Duviquet, Becquet, who were clever, erudite men no doubt, wrote dramatic notices in which the good and the bad features of a play were carefully noted and which resembled corrected themes. These comments were written in a cold, colourless, clear style, as transparent as filtered water in a crystal carafe, which the French naturally prefer to the rich, blazing, varied colours of gems and stained glass. A young fellow with curly black hair, plump, rosy cheeks, red lips, bright smile, came to Paris from the Provinces and changed all that

with his intoxicating ardour, his joyous audacity, his high spirits which showed on the least pretext in bright smiles and sonorous laughter, his ever ready facility, his inexhaustible abundance, and a really new way of writing in which every word was equivalent to his signature.

Thus did he appear, healthy, happy, among the yallery-greenery, elegiacal, Byronic chorus of the Romanticists, — an original and jolly face, genuinely French. No doubt he was a Romanticist, like all the youth of that day, but in his own way, without belonging to any set, with a shade of undisciplined irony which questions while it admires. He may have preferred Diderot to Shakespeare, and he may have read more willingly "Rameau's Nephew" than "As You Like It," or "The Tempest," or "A Midsummer Night's Dream." He was satisfied with the eighteenth century, while we went back to the sixteenth, kneeling before Ronsard and the poets of the Pleiad. The love of Latin, already so greatly developed in him, seems to have preserved him from the enthusiasm excited by exotic literatures. He bowed as he passed the foreign gods, whom he perhaps considered somewhat barbaric, as the Athenians did what-

ever was not Greek; but his devotion to the imported altars was never very fervent.

Like most of us at that precocious time of early maturity, he possessed his talent forthwith and his first attempts were master-strokes. Now that we are accustomed to that perpetual wonder, it is impossible to imagine the effect produced at that time by his thoroughly new, youthful, dainty style, charming in its harmony, incomparable in its freshness of tone, with the velvet bloom of a pastel, set off by a small patch, with its swarm of light-winged phrases fluttering here and there as if at haphazard under their gauze drapery, but always finding their way and bringing back flowers which of themselves formed a dazzling bouquet studded with diamonds of dew and shedding the sweetest perfumes.

"Where is he going to?" people asked with the uneasiness so speedily dispelled, called out by cleverly performed feats of strength, when at the beginning of an article he started from a melodrama or a vaudeville in pursuit of a paradox, a fancy, or a dream, interrupting himself to relate an anecdote, to run after a butterfly, leaving his subject and returning to it, opening in a parenthesis an outlook upon a smiling landscape or a

glimpse of bluish lane ending in a jet of water or a statue, enjoying himself like a street boy who sets off crackers between the reader's legs, and laughing heartily at the involuntary jump caused by the explosion. But as he goes strolling along in this way he meets at the corner of a path the idea, which was wandering along, he looks at it, finds it fair, noble, chaste, he falls in love with it in a second, gets excited, warm, eloquent, and passionate; he becomes serious, eloquent, and convinced; he defends with lyrical, honest indignation, beauty, goodness, truth, that moral trinity, which counts to-day nearly as many unbelievers as the theological Trinity. He is a sage, a philosopher, almost a preacher. And the forgotten play? He remembers it somewhat late, when he finds that he has got to the end of the tenth column of his article and that presently the portico will be completed; so in a few sharp, quick, telling words he gives the subject of the drama or the comedy, he states its defects and its qualities, approves or disapproves its tendencies with that common-sense of his which is scarcely ever mistaken, in his feeling for the stage transformed by years into infallible experience. He has even had time to review the actors, to flatter or scold them, or at least

to call them by their names like a general who rides down the line of battle. So "the prince of the critics" was at that time and is still a current expression understood by every one as meaning Jules Janin, just as "our most fertile novelist" means Balzac.

You will readily believe that a style with so characteristic a swing, so peculiar a savour, so marked a manner, was frequently imitated — but no one imitated it so well as Janin himself.

I have dwelt on the new academician's talent as a writer of newspaper articles; it is that side of him which the public knows most of and that in which he shows himself oftenest at that Monday balcony whence the writer bows to his readers; but J. J. (who now becomes Jules Janin in full and will hereafter add the regulation words "of the French Academy") has written quite a number of very good books: "The Dead Ass and the Beheaded Wife," — one of those youthful sins which a man ought not to disavow later under pretext of wisdom and taste, for it is these which make you known and make you famous; "Barnave," in which there are so many splendid passages; "The Pedestal," a bold subject brilliantly carried out; "Clarissa Harlowe," drawn from her dull setting and

restored with pious care; "The End of a World," which is the continuation and the conclusion of "Rameau's Nephew"; "The Nun of Toulouse," and many other books well written and well printed, worthy in every respect to be placed in the Passy chalet on the shelves of the select library by the side of the *princeps* editions of the great authors splendidly bound by Bauzonnet, Capet, Petit, and the other masters of the art, the pride and happiness of the scholar who lives in the midst of these riches, which he is not satisfied with looking at, but which he reads, studies, and the very marrow of which he assimilates.

That is readily seen in his style.

Janin's speech on the great writer (Sainte-Beuve) whose place he took in the Academy has been published by the papers, and the dramatic critic did full justice to the critic of books. He told us of his marvellous success, of his depth of intuition, of his subtlety, of his patience as an investigator, of his gift of understanding everything, feeling everything, of entering into the most opposite natures, living their life, thinking their thoughts, descending into their most secret parts, a golden lamp in his hand, and of passing like the Hindoo gods through a perpetual

series of incarnations and avatars. He suitably lauded that curiosity constantly awake, never satisfied, which thought it knew nothing if it had allowed the least detail to escape. *Homo duplex*, man is double, said the philosopher. As far as Sainte-Beuve is concerned, he is even triple, and desiring to complete the portrait which all believed to be finished, he asked for new sittings from the model, sought more information, ferreted out, found out, and only passed to another when the resemblance of the picture placed upon the easel left nothing more to be desired.

Certainly, if anything from this world reaches the other, Sainte-Beuve must have been happy at hearing himself praised thus. Perhaps he may have thought that because the critic was so highly lauded, the poet was somewhat too lightly spoken of. That was his only and secret self-love; — Sainte-Beuve almost regretted that his second reputation, so vast, so deserved, so universally accepted, should have masked, as it were, or eclipsed the first. "The poet, who died young while the man survived," still existed for him, ever young and living, and he loved people to allude to him and to ask for him; it was with real pleasure that he recited to his intimate friends, without much press-

ing, some fragments of a mysterious elegy, some languorous love sonnet, which had not found a place in one of his three volumes of verse. A word or two about "Joseph Delorme," or "Consolations," and especially "Thoughts in August" caused him greater joy than manifold praise of his last "Causerie du lundi"; for he had indeed been an inventor in poetry, he had struck a new and wholly modern note, and of all his set he was assuredly the most romantic. In the humble poetry, which by the sincerity of feeling and the minuteness of detail copied from nature recalls the verse of Crabbe, Wordsworth and Cowper, Sainte-Beuve traced out for himself little footpaths half-way up the hill, bordered with common little flowers, where no one in France had passed before him. His composition is somewhat laborious and complex, owing to the difficulty he experienced in reducing to metrical form ideas and images yet unexpressed or hitherto disdained. But how many admirable, inspired passages, in which no effort is felt! What intense, subtle charm! What an intimate penetration of the weariness of the soul! What a divination of unconfessed desires and obscure supplications! Sainte-Beuve as a poet would easily form the subject of a long and interesting study.

TONY JOHANNOT

BORN IN 1803 — DIED IN 1852

ALTHOUGH Tony Johannot was a newspaper man through his illustrations, he did not attract, as he deserved to do, the attention of contemporary critics, because newspapers talk about everything except newspaper men. Tony Johannot sketched his articles in pencil; that was the only difference.

The admiration felt in France for soporific talents is the reason why until now justice has not been done to him. As people glance at one of his numberless drawings, they remark, "It is very pretty," and pass on. If he had painted some huge daub full of wooden figures on cardboard horses, he might have been elected to the Institute and would have enjoyed the consideration which takes the shape of crosses, of offices and dignities. Nothing is so hurtful to a man as grace, wit, and facility. The average individual who sees a clever man produce rapidly a pretty thing, thinks he

has been done out of his money; so clever men shut themselves up in their den, even if they simply intend to go to sleep, put a lighted lamp near the window, and affirm that they have spent three months in producing a work which they really dashed off in three days. Tony Johannot had to bear the consequences of having published in the course of fifteen years, without making any fuss and merely when asked by publishers, a vast number of delightful sketches which, though they were dashed off, were none the less finished work and which many painters of great pretensions would have found it difficult to equal. This enormous quantity of work, scattered in more than a thousand volumes, can sustain comparison with the works of Cochin, Gravelot, Eisen, Moreau, Saint-Non, and the cleverest sketchers of previous centuries.

At all times books have been more or less richly illustrated. The illuminators and miniaturists of the Middle Ages covered the margins of missals and romances of chivalry with marvellous arabesques in which fantastic birds mingled with ideal flowers in a maze of curves fit to drive the most patient copyist to despair. The capital letters formed frames for small episodical scenes, and in the most important places

were inserted vignettes in which ultramarine and gold rival each other in brilliancy and beauty. Printing was the death of caligraphy, engraving suppressed the illuminator and miniaturist, but the custom of illustrating valuable books and of translating a page into a drawing remained.

This kind of work, in which the pencil intensifies the stroke of the pen, calls for a particular kind of talent. The artist must understand the poet, and be himself, so to speak, a literary man. It is not a question of transferring nature directly to the canvas, of copying reality as it is seen, — for in art there are innumerable forms of reality, — of seizing the play of light and shade, of reproducing the attitude of the head which you like, of the smile which charms you; that is the painter's business. The book illustrator — we may be allowed this neologism, which has almost ceased to be one — must see only with another's eyes. He loves dark women with arched eyebrows, blue-black hair, clean, Syracusan profiles; his author's heroine is a regular German moonbeam, showing silvery amid falling hair. He has never seen the luxurious vegetation of the tropics, the palms, the rose-apples, the frangipanes, though he knows thoroughly the hedges

of hawthorn, the brooks purling under the water cress, the hut hidden between the walnut trees — but it is "Paul and Virginia" which he has to illustrate; never mind, he will make a masterpiece of it.

Like the newspaper man, the illustrator must always be ready for anything. Which of us knows what he will write about to-morrow? In one and the same article, chance may take us from Russia to Egypt, from the hoariest antiquity to the most living actuality; every minute we have to overleap two thousand years or two thousand leagues; every period, every country, every style must be known. That is a difficulty which is not thought of and which is tremendous. To accept a subject or to choose it for yourself are two very different things. Much adaptability, much intelligence, much readiness of mind, much quickness of hand are needed for such difficult work. Tony Johannot is unquestionably the prince of illustrators. Some years ago no novel or poem could be published without a wood-cut signed with his name. How many slim-waisted, swan-necked, long-locked, small-footed heroines he has drawn on Japan paper! How many a ragged tramp, how many a knight armed cap-à-pie, how many a scaly, many-clawed monster he has scattered upon the

yellow covers of mediæval novels! He has handled all the verse and all the literature of ancient and modern times: the Bible, Molière, Cervantes, Walter Scott, Byron, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Goethe, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, — he has treated every one of them. His drawings appeared in these wondrous books and no one thought them out of place. By the side of these sublime pages, of these harmonious verses, they formed an ornament and not a blot. What so many different geniuses dreamed, he succeeded in rendering and transporting it into his own art. Assuredly that is a glory worth many another, to have put his name into all these books, the honour of humankind. Ary Scheffer, though he never made any vignettes, may be considered as the type of the literary artist, whose genius is excited by the art of a poem. What are "Marguerite Spinning," "Marguerite at Church," the two "Mignons," "Medora," "The Giaour," "The King of Thule," "Eberhard the Weeper," but splendid illustrations? If Scheffer had met the real Marguerite in the street, he would doubtless have been less struck with her than with Goethe's Marguerite whom he met in a scene in "Faust." Highly developed civilisation, the fusion of the various arts, the

habit of living among the creations of the mind, have the effect on certain peculiar minds of making them see nature at last only through the masterpieces of men.

No doubt thorough-bred painters, who need but a contour to excite them and who discover a painting in an attitude, in the fall of a fold, are to be preferred; but there is to me a wondrous charm in these delicate flowers which have bloomed in the hot-house of another art. Their tints are of a lovely pallor, they have soft shades penetrated, as it were, by a mysterious light; under the colours of the painter, you hear the murmur of the poet's strophes. These hybrid creations have a peculiar attraction for refined minds.

What Ary Scheffer realised in a sphere serene and apart, Tony Johannot accomplished within the conditions of modern industry which constantly — and that is the greatest praise which can be given it — has need of the arts; and he did it amid all the tumult and all the chances of publication. He despised nothing, not even the heading of a page, an ornamental letter, or a poster; he lent his swift, clever pencil, his compositions, ever intelligent and fine, to all men, poets, historians, novelists, or writers of picturesque works.

One needs to know, as I do, how little is left of a

drawing engraved on wood, then electrotyped and printed with thick ink, to admire Johannot as he deserves to be admired. The engraver merits, as much as the translator, the epithet *traditore*.

Weary of seeing his delicate work made heavy by coarse or careless engravers, Tony Johannot ended in refusing to trust any one but himself. He remembered that he also had once handled the graver, and turning to account the publication of a beautiful work which a publisher of taste desired to bring out, he himself etched a series of exquisite illustrations for Goethe's "Werther," translated by Pierre Leroux and with a preface by George Sand.

Tony Johannot, the improvising artist, supplies with Gavarni the illustrations called for by Paris. Only, there is between Tony Johannot and Gavarni this difference, that the former does his best work in books, while Gavarni prefers to choose his own subject. Gavarni's types belong to him more completely, but he lacks Johannot's skill in translating the thought of others. Johannot is more of a poet, Gavarni more of a philosopher; the one understands and the other sees; but those two, such as they are, have no rivals in the art which they follow.

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Portr[illegible] of the Day

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AN artist's life is [illegible]
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has [illegible]
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Roger delivering Angelica. By Ingres.

INGRES

BORN IN 1781 — DIED IN 1867

AN artist's life is in his work, especially nowadays when the development of civilisation has diminished the number of eventful lives and almost destroyed the chance of personal adventure. The biographies of most of the great masters of past ages contain a legend, a romance, or, at all events, a story. Those of the famous painters and sculptors of our day may be summed up in a few lines: struggle in obscurity, work in shadow, suffering bravely borne, a reputation denied at first, later acknowledged, recompensed more or less sufficiently, great orders, the cross of the Legion of Honour, election to the Institute. Aside from a few victims who fall before the hour of triumph and who are ever to be regretted, such is, save for a small number of special details, the usual substance of modern biographies. But if facts have small place in them, on the other hand, ideas and characters take up much room; the works make up for the incidents which are lacking.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres was born at Montauban in 1781, so he is seventy-six to-day. Never was there a greener old age or one that weighed less upon the man, and we may safely venture to promise that the illustrious master will live as long as Titian and even longer.

There is a portrait of Ingres painted by himself, in 1804. He has represented himself standing in front of his easel with the end of his cloak thrown over his shoulder. In his right hand he holds a white pencil, his left rests on his breast; the head, in three quarters, faces you. The painter seems to be calling up his faith and his will before beginning his work. The features, in spite of their youth (the artist was then twenty-four), are strongly marked. The hair, of a deep black, is parted on the brow and curls freely and strongly; the brown eyes are of an almost wild brilliancy, the lips are a rich red, and the complexion, tanned by internal fires, recalls the amber, tawny tone which Giorgione was so fond of; the turned-down shirt-collar sets off by its broad white tint the warm flesh tones. The background is of that neutral tone with which studio walls are painted.

The portrait shows remarkable virility; it is full of

the vigorous life of youth, held in by the will. The master shows behind the student. Those who accuse Ingres of being cold have certainly not seen that quick, strong, determined face which seems to follow you with its dark, steady, deep glance. It is one of those troublesome portraits with which you can never be alone in the room where they hang, for a soul watches you through the dark eyes.

I am very fond of looking at the portraits of illustrious masters painted at the outset of their career, before glory has settled upon their dreamy brow. Such portraits are rare. It is not until men have grown older and become famous that people bethink themselves of multiplying their likeness.

The artist has fulfilled every promise held out by this particular portrait, — ardent faith, undaunted courage, invincible perseverance. In the clean lines, in the strongly marked flats, in the strong build of the man shows an obstinate genius which may even be called hard-headed. Has it not been said that genius is infinite patience? The motto of such a man seems to be, *Etiam si omnes ego non;* and in truth nothing, neither classical pedantry nor Romanticist riotousness, have succeeded in turning away from the worship of

pure beauty that enthusiastic artist, who was so long a solitary, who preferred to await reputation rather than acquire it hastily by conforming to popular ideas. At a time when men doubted, hesitated, idled, he proved to be a believer who never wavered for a second. Nature, Phidias, and Raphael were to him a sort of trinity of art, the Ideal of which was the unity. If a monk's cowl replaced the cloak, the painting would show a young Italian monk of the Middle Ages, one of those who became cardinals or popes; for they possessed the power of following out a single idea their life long.

Now let us look at the portrait of the great master full of years and honours, who reigned despotically over a school of enthusiastic followers, worshipped and feared like a god. The hair, which as yet shows but a slight touch of white, is still parted in the centre in honour of the divine Sanzio, a sort of mysterious token by which the devotee consecrates himself to his ideal. A few wrinkles have slightly furrowed the brow, a few veins show upon the broader temples; compact, solid flesh broadens the original form and marks strongly the outlines shown in the earlier portrait. The mouth is sadder-looking, with two or

three morose wrinkles at the corners, but the eye preserves its immortal youth and still gazes upon the same end, the Beautiful. Instead of the modern overcoat, place on that figure a Roman mantle, and the head, with its strong lines, and its vigorous colour modified, not destroyed by age, could figure among the Roman prelates assembled in conclave, or in a ceremony in the Sistine Chapel. If I insist upon this point, it is because the worship of art, of which he was the most fervent priest, imparted to Ingres a positively pontifical aspect. During his whole life he carried the sacred Ark and bore the tables of the Law.

The biographies of artists begin usually with a narration of the obstacles placed in the way of an undoubted vocation by the members of the family. The father, who wants his son to be a notary, a doctor, or a barrister, burns the poems, tears up the drawings, hides the brushes. In Ingres' case, wonderful to relate, there were no difficulties of this sort. The son's intentions agreed with the father's wishes; the child was given paper, red pencils, and a portfolio of engravings to copy; he also learned music on the violin. Painter or musician, whichever it might be, such a

career in no wise terrified his excellent father. The phenomenon is explained by the fact that the latter was himself a musician and a painter. Young Ingres was sent to the studio of M. Roque, of Toulouse, a pupil of Vien; but the thing which decided his fate was the sight of a copy of the "Madonna della Sedia" brought from Italy, rather than his master's teaching. The impression this picture made on him was ineffaceable; even now, when he is over sixty, it still rules his life.

A few years later he came to Paris and entered David's studio. He obtained at the competition a second prize, which exempted him from conscription. In 1801 he took the first prize for his painting, "Achilles receiving in his tent the deputies of Agamemnon," which is now to be seen at the Academy of Fine Arts, and which is already characteristic of him. Although a laureate, he did not at once leave for the Eternal City, which was to become his second country. The finances of the State were exhausted, and there were no funds to pay bursaries, so he waited for a more fortunate time, working and drawing from the antique and the model in the Museum and at Susse's studio, copying engravings

of the great masters, and preparing himself for coming glory, by hard, serious study.

At last he got to Rome, to the city in which before him another austere master, Poussin, had become so thoroughly naturalised that he almost forgot France amidst the masterpieces of antiquity. The artistic atmosphere, so favourable to quiet and thoughtful work, suited him admirably; he grew stronger in silence, in solitude, far from coteries and sets, and turned his studio into a sort of cloister which the rumour of the world never reached. He lived alone, proud and sad; but every day he could admire the *Loggie* and the *Stanze* of Raphael, and that consoled him for many things. Soon after, he married the woman who had been sent to him from France, and who, by providential good fortune, turned out to be exactly the one whom he would have chosen for himself. Every one knows with what tireless devotion Madame Ingres kept from her husband all those little troubles which wear and distract genius. She concealed from him the painful side of life, and created around him an atmosphere of calm and serenity, even when times were hardest. Sure of attaining his end sooner or later, although he saw his work disregarded

or little esteemed, Ingres persisted in following the path upon which he had started, and often want made itself felt within his household. Such poverty is glorious and may well be spoken of. At Florence the artist, whose work is now worth its weight in gold, was obliged to paint portraits for the meanest price in order to defray household expenses, and he did not even always have portraits to paint. Never did an artist carry farther contempt for money and easily acquired reputation.

He laboured a long time over his paintings, and knew how to await the moment of inspiration of works which were to last forever. The public is inclined to believe that the painter of the "Vow of Louis XIII," of the Homer ceiling and of the "Stratonice," is not a rapid worker. That is a mistake. The painter is so thoroughly trained and so sure of himself that he never puts on a touch of colour which does not tell, and often Ingres has painted in a single day a great figure from head to foot in which no one else than he could detect a defect. But an artist so conscientious and so strong is not easily satisfied; what is well is not sufficient, he wants the best, and only stops at the point where the imperfection of human means stops geniuses which are

most trained to pursue the ideal. So paintings which he began at the outset of his career have only recently been finished, but those who have been fortunate enough to see them do not think the artist took too long to complete them, although they have been some forty years on the easel.

"The Odalisque," for which Queen Caroline of Naples gave him a commission in 1813 and which was purchased by M. Pourtalès in 1816 for the ornament of his gallery — it now belongs to M. Goupil, who was determined that the masterpiece should not leave France — was the first picture which drew attention to the master, who was yet unknown in his own country. The effect it produced might have discouraged a man of less sturdy convictions. His exquisite perfection of drawing, his admirable and delicate modeling, the splendid taste which united the choicest of nature to the purest traditions of antiquity, were not then appreciated. "The Odalisque" was called Gothic, and the painter was accused of seeking to go back to the dawn of art. This strange judgment is no invention of mine. The barbarians whom his critics of 1817 said Ingres was supposed to be imitating were merely Andrea Mantegna, Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino,

Raphael, — people who, as of course every one knows, have long since been left behind by progress. Later on the Romanticists also were reproached with making the French language go back to Ronsard.

"The Vow of Louis XIII," on which Ingres worked for three years, at last compelled admiration. Never, indeed, since the days of the painter of Urbino had a nobler, a more splendid Madonna presented a more divine Child Jesus to the worship of angels and of men. The French artist had taken rank, by that masterpiece, among the great Italian masters of the sixteenth century. The angels drawing up the curtains, the children bearing tablets, the King's figure seen from the back and showing merely a slight profile above a great fleur-de-lised mantle, the folds of which spread out over the slabs of the pavement, were painted in a style and with a power the traditions of which had been lost for more than two centuries.

In 1824 Ingres received the cross of the Legion of Honour, and in 1825 he was elected to the Institute of France. The "Apotheosis of Homer," in the Salon of 1827, at which were exhibited also Eugène Devéria's "Birth of Henry IV," and Eugène Dela-

croix' "Sardanapalus," crowned the glory of the artist who had been so long misunderstood. He thus gained for himself in a serene region far above the squabbles of schools, a position apart, which he has kept ever since and which no one has attempted to take from him. He maintains himself in it with majestic tranquillity,—*pacem summa tenent*,—hearing only the vague rumours of the distant world and cultivating the beautiful without any distraction; a stranger to his time, but living with Phidias and Raphael that eternal life of art which is true life, since often but a poem, a statue, a painting remains of a whole vanished nation.

Curiously enough, this austere master was supported by the Romanticists, and he counted more enthusiastic partisans among the members of the new school than in the Academy. Although Ingres might, to a superficial observer, appear to be a classical painter, he is not in the least so; he goes back straight to primitive sources, to Greek antiquity, to the sixteenth century; no one more faithfully observes local colour than he does. His "Entry of Charles V into Paris" is like a Gothic tapestry; his "Francesca da Rimini" seems to have been taken from one of those precious illumin-

ated manuscripts which called for all the patience of artists; his "Roger and Angelica" possesses the chivalrous grace of Ariosto's poem; his "Sistine Chapel" might have been signed by Titian; while the subjects he has drawn from antiquity, such as "Œdipus," "The Apotheosis of Homer," the "Stratonice," "Venus Anadyomene," seem to be painted in exactly the way that Appelles would have painted them. His "Odalisques" would excite the Sultan's jealousy, so familiar does the artist appear to be with the secrets of the harem. Nor has any one rendered modern life better than he has, as witness the immortal portrait of M. Bertin de Vaux, which seems to be the physiology of a character and the history of a reign. If Ingres knows how to make the folds of Greek drapery fall admirably, he knows equally well how to turn modern dress to the best account, and how to drape a shawl, as is proved by his portraits of women.

Whatever may be the subject he takes up, Ingres treats it with the same rigorous accuracy, the same extreme fidelity to colour and form, and never yields to academic mannerism; for if in Cherubini's historical portrait he has introduced Polyhymnia stretching

out her hand over the artist's inspired brow, he has represented the old master in his wig and cloak; and in his treatment of subjects drawn from antiquity, Ingres acts exactly like a poet who, desiring to write a Greek tragedy, goes back to Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, instead of imitating Racine and his disciples. In this sense he is a Romanticist; hence it is not surprising that he gained many followers among the new school, although for the public in general any man who paints scenes from ancient history and mythology is a Classicist.

The "Martyrdom of Saint Symphorius," which would have been admired by Michael Angelo and Giulio Romano, was not fortunate enough to please the French public at the Exposition of 1834. The sublime head of the saint, the magnificent gesture of the mother, the superb attitudes of the lictors, were not enough to make the colour, with its mat, sober, strong likeness to the tone of the frescoes of the great masters, find favour in the eyes of the sight-seers. The artist, rightly indignant, withdrew, as Achilles under his tent, to Rome, where he became director of the French School, and he gave himself up to the teaching of his art with an authority which no other

professor could equal. His pupils adored and feared him, and every day there occurred in the school violent and extraordinary scenes, quarrels, and reconciliations. Ingres speaks of his art with singular eloquence. Phidias and Raphael excite in him effusions and lyrical outbursts which should be taken down in short-hand. On other occasions, when calmer, he enunciates maxims and advice which it is always well to follow, and which contain the whole æsthetics of painting compressed in an abrupt, concise, but clear way.

His influence has been very great and continues to be felt. Hippolyte Flandrin, Amaury Duval, Lehmann, Ziegler, Chassériau were his most remarkable pupils, but each one, it may be said, did honour to his master within the bounds of his own talent.

At the Universal Exposition of 1855, Ingres' works were exhibited in a separate room, a sort of special chapel of that great jubilee of painting to which the worshippers of the beautiful repaired from every country under the sun.

The limits of my article have not allowed me to write of the whole of the master's work; I preferred to consider the artist generally. In spite of some personal peculiarities, I admire his whole personality,

his harmonious life dedicated unreservedly to art, his persistent striving after the beautiful, which nothing has distracted. Men who are partisans of religious, political, or philosophical systems, will no doubt affirm that Ingres does not serve any idea. That is precisely wherein lies his superiority. Art is the end, and not a means for him, and never was there a higher end. Every poet, sculptor, or painter who uses his pen, chisel, or brush to serve any system whatever, may be more or less of a statesman, or of a philosopher, but I should greatly mistrust the value of his verse, of his statues, of his paintings. He has failed to understand that beauty is superior to any other conception. Did not Plato himself say that "Beauty is the splendour of truth?"

There is still another quality which could be joined to all the others which Ingres possessed: he preserved the secret, now lost, of reproducing feminine beauty. Look at the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," at "Angelica," "The Odalisque," the "Portrait of Mme. de Vauçay," which the great Leonardo da Vinci would willingly have signed; at "Cherubini's Muse," the "Venus Anadyomene," the "Stratonice," the figure of Victory in "The Apotheosis of Napoleon," and

finally "The Spring," a genuine Parian marble flushed with life, an incredible masterpiece, a marvel of grace and of bloom, a flower of Greek springtime which blossomed under the artist's brush at an age when the palette falls from the sturdiest hands.

PAUL DELAROCHE

BORN IN 1797 — DIED IN 1836

IN years gone by, I criticised Paul Delaroche rather harshly. It was in the days when controversies on art were fought out to the bitter end and with the sharpest weapons. Happy times they were! Who gets excited to-day for or against a poet, a painter, or a composer? The splendid wrath and the hot admiration of bygone years are known no more. I hated Paul Delaroche, whom I had never seen, with a savage and æsthetic hatred; I could have eaten him, and thought him good eating, as the young redskin thought the Bishop of Quebec. What was the cause of this deep aversion? Delaroche in painting, as Casimir Delavigne in literature, was hurting and turning out of its course, by prudent concessions, by timid boldness, by a sort of *bourgeois* Romanticism, the great movement directed by Victor Hugo and Eugène Delacroix. His paintings, composed like the endings of a tragedy and executed with

extreme finish, drew crowds. He indulged in a coquettish, polished, lustrous mediævalism, minutely accurate in trifles, which delighted the Philistines. On all hands I was asked, "What more do you want? He does not paint Greeks or Romans." But I had discovered the leg of Achilles in Cromwell's jack-boot, and the torso of Hyacinth under the surcoat of the Princes in the Tower, and thereat I did both yell and rage! I wish you could have seen me, with wild hair and all my claws showing, leaping about in my part of the newspaper like a caged wild beast. The fanatics of my school, the wan, the tanned, the greenery-yallery, the long-haired, the fiercely moustached, the heavily bearded, those who wore ruffles and jerkins, called out, "Well roared, lion."

Many years have since gone by. As I recall these things and smile at the sacred fury of my youth, I do not in any respect regret it. Pure thought inspired me, boundless love of art impelled me, and the danger which I pointed out was in no wise chimerical. I was wrong, no doubt, in the form of my attack, but at bottom I was right. My task was a noble one; I was pleading the cause of ignored genius against popular talent, and fanatical, like every believer, I tried to

shatter the idol of the crowd in order to erect upon its pedestal the statue of the true god.

Since then, while remaining true to my beliefs, I have come to recognise the ingenious mind, the patient study, and the unswerving perseverance of the artist; I have admired, as every one has, and more than any one has, that marvellous little masterpiece, "The Death of the Duke of Guise," an amazingly faithful historical painting, a photographic reproduction of a period made centuries later, a retrospective picture which might well be the work of an eye-witness.

Although Paul Delaroche enjoyed a reputation more than European, and which might, without exaggeration be called world-wide, it is not a paradox to affirm that he is little known. Among the members of the present generation, there are few who have seen paintings by him. Popular though he was, thanks to the splendid engravings published by Goupil, who had for him a sort of worship, he avoided the noisy arena of the Salon; he even kept away from the great Exposition of 1855, to which French and foreign masters sent their finest paintings.

The exhibition of his works in the Palace of the Fine Arts, was almost a complete novelty to most of

the visitors, to whom the recent works of the painter are assuredly unknown, even supposing they have seen and recall his former ones.

I approve of these solemn exhibitions, in which the dead artist, before he passes definitely to posterity, shows frankly and simply his work from his earliest lisp in art to his final word. So what I have to do now is to pass a serious judgment which shall conciliate the respect due to an illustrious memory with the severity obligatory in matters affecting the present and the future of art. I am far from desiring to diminish the reputation of one of the glories of France, and yet it is well not to yield to an easily understood admiration, and in the name of high art to make some reservations, to state some objections against tendencies which ought not to be encouraged.

Paul Delaroche was not born a painter. He did not possess the gift, as did the masters of the sixteenth century, to say nothing of some of our own contemporaries; art is not in him a native flower which blooms spontaneously in the springtime of life, and crowns the brow of Raphael; Delaroche did not produce, when quite young and almost unconsciously, masterpieces which he found it difficult to surpass in mature age,

even if he managed to equal them. He had not the innate feeling for form, still less the fecling for colour, or that imperious temperament of the painter, which betrays itself in the first daubs of the child. But he possessed in a high degree intelligence and will; he bent all the persistent qualities of his mind to the attainment of a determinate end; he worked, he corrected, he improved, and he stopped only at his extreme limits, starting again when rested and stronger, after a halt for meditation. Never was the oft quoted Latin proverb, *Labor improbus omnia vincit*, more fittingly applicable; but notwithstanding the proverb, it is not true that determined work will accomplish everything; grace, in the Christian sense, is also needed; works alone will not save a man.

Differing in this from born painters, to whom the subject of a composition is almost always indifferent, and who make hundreds of masterpieces out of two or three insignificant subjects, Paul Delaroche was always very much concerned with it. In this respect it may be said that he belonged to the middle classes. He tried to be interesting, which is a matter absolutely secondary in art. If a visitor in a gallery of paintings stops before a picture, and instead of looking at it and

enjoying it, first turns over his catalogue to find out what is the historical scene or anecdote represented, you may affirm of him, without fear of being mistaken, that unquestionably the man does not love painting.

Delaroche has far too many such visitors. Cleanness of outline, power or delicacy in modelling, harmony in colour, the imitation of nature idealised through style, are far more important than curiosity or the selection of a subject. There is the true, the only, the unchanging subject of painting. Of late the literary idea has been confounded with the picturesque idea, yet no two things can be more dissimilar. If I were to say that a picture of still life by Chardon, which represents a ray fish, a bunch of celery, a stewpan, or an earthenware jar even, has the picturesque idea which is lacking in vast cyclical, genetical, philosophical, historical, ethnographical, and prophetical compositions, I should probably surprise many society people, but certainly, I should not surprise artists, who are perfectly well aware of that truth. In France the feeling for plasticity scarcely exists; beauty in itself does not interest us. The multitude, cold and inattentive, passes by a Greek torso, headless, armless, legless, a divine fragment which sings the hymn of pure beauty

in its mute marble language, and crowds in front of a painting which needs a page of explanations in small type in the Salon catalogue. Delaroche's success with this portion of the public was therefore immense every time he allowed them to see his pictures. He introduced the drama into painting. Every one of his works is like the fifth act of a melodrama or of a tragedy, and at the bottom of them might be written, as a last direction, "Curtain."

Our people prefer a dramatic form, for it suits our simple, accurate, positive minds. Paul Delaroche was very French in this respect; he himself possessed the taste which he so thoroughly served. At bottom Ingres' drawing is as unpleasant to the general public as Delacroix' colour, for two different reasons. These two masters cultivated pure art; that is, for the one, line is the most important thing, as tone is for the other. They do not delight that numerous class which reads a picture as it would one of Walter Scott's novels.

It is strange to affirm of a man who attained every possible honour in his art, that he mistook his vocation when he chose painting, which brought him so much renown; but after having paid three visits to the exhibition in the Palace of the Fine Arts, I cannot help

feeling that Paul Delaroche would have succeeded much better on the stage; it was in that direction that his real talent lay, for he possessed remarkable skill in stage-setting and wonderful knowledge of dramatic grouping, and even — to be quite frank — of the way to light up the dead and the beheaded.

One very striking fact, brought out most significantly by the exposition in the Palace of Fine Arts, is the uninterrupted progress of the artist as his work advanced; the merit of his paintings might be classified in chronological order and the man who wanted to have the best need only carry away the last. If he could have lived to a hundred, like Titian, he would unquestionably have become a great painter. There is something touching in his intelligent and reflective obstinacy, which progressed towards perfection slowly but surely, never discouraged, understanding what it lacks, seeking to acquire it, and almost managing, in "The Christian Martyr," to produce a real masterpiece after so many sham ones. At a time of life when decadence has, in the case of most men, long since begun, Paul Delaroche kept on rising.

To understand how great is the distance he has traversed, one must look longer than they deserve,

perhaps, at the paintings in the first room, the oldest in point of time, and it will be seen with what blind groping, with what laborious uncertainty, with what painful stiffness, the painter's will makes its way through all obstacles. The one idea which is still quite visible is the subject, ever the main preoccupation of Delaroche. "Joash Saved from the Dead," "The Death of President Duranti," "The Death of Queen Elizabeth," "The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew," "The Death of Agostino Caracci," "Joan of Arc questioned by the Cardinal of Winchester," — all these show his seeking after funereal or violent scenes. The drawing is weak, the forms are mean or exaggerated, the colour is dull or staring; the composition alone is remarkable for its ingenious or theatrical arrangement. Such as they are, at the time when they were first exhibited these paintings must have attracted the attention of the crowd, although they could not satisfy the severe taste of connoisseurs. Delaroche, no doubt, thought them worse than any one else did, for no one was more lucidly critical concerning his own work.

"Cardinal Richelieu towing Cinq-Mars and de Thou behind his barge on the Rhone," "Cardinal Mazarin watching a game of cards from his bed,"

mark a distinct advance in the artist's work. The composition is clever; the colour, in spite of exaggerated transparencies, and glaring high-lights, does not affect one unpleasantly; the faces of the characters have the imprint of the time, the costumes are correct; the painter's thought is readily grasped, and the two paintings, reproduced by engravings, are hanging as companions on the walls of more than one drawing-room of the middle-class public.

I believe that this was the natural turn of Delaroche's talent. Episodical history, treated within these limits, suited his powers, which were delicate rather than strong. "The Assassination of the Duke of Guise," which is his masterpiece, proves this. In this case there is room for praise only. The pale, effeminate head which shows at the door and gazes fearfully at the great body that lies at the other end of the room murdered by ruffianly cut-throats, produces a dramatic impression in the truest sense of the word; it is as genuine as a scene in Shakespeare. The background, with its minute realism, imparts reality to a scene which must certainly have occurred as it is represented. The personages have the attitudes of *bravi*, and seem drawn from life by a contemporary. Never was the

local colour of any period better or more faithfully reproduced.

The "Jane Grey" is a Romanticist painting after the fashion of Casimir Delavigne, with whom Paul Delaroche had much in common. The painter and the poet might have exchanged subjects for tragedies and pictures; they both understood art in the same way, and both, therefore, won during their lifetime that popular success which serious art does not always obtain. There is a great deal of skill in this painting. The straw which is intended to soak up the victim's blood on the scaffold deceives the eye, and more than one spectator is tempted to draw out a piece of it. The little waxen hands of Jane Grey, which are put out and seem to feel for the block, formerly made a deep impression upon Philistine sensibilities, and possibly still do so. The white satin of the skirt is also very beautiful, the folds are nicely broken and shimmer with pearly tones, and are set off by light shadows. The face of the maid, who is fainting and leans against a pillar, recalls in its costume and its adornment certain figures of Holbein, although it lacks substance and is as flat as if it were cut out of paper and stuck on the gray background; nevertheless, there

is a certain feeling and sentiment about it. The violet trunk-hose of the executioner is empty, and the legs which it is supposed to cover are not indicated by any anatomical detail; yet the contrast between the lovely neck and the heavy axe makes one shudder; and it would always be difficult, if not impossible, to make a French public understand that this pathetic scene is not a good painting, and that the smallest sketch by a Venetian of the decadence, Tiepolo, Montemezzano, Fumiani, or any other whose name is not written or spoken once in ten years, fulfils much more completely the conditions of art. That very defect is the cause of Delaroche's success. Painting for a people which is literary above all things, he did not paint, but wrote his pictures, and the reasons which led me to blame him are precisely those which won him success. Yet it would be unfair not to acknowledge that there is a great deal of improvement in "Jane Grey" over "The Death of Elizabeth," in the form at least. The artist does what he wants to do, he has rendered his conception absolutely; the master begins to show.

The "Strafford" annoys the eye by the abuse of black tints, which have an ugly look of shoe-black-

ing. Artists who are colourists skilfully relieve by means of *glacis* and reflections that tint which absorbs the light and the use of which should be avoided as much as possible. Van Dyck very often painted figures dressed in black, but he did not indulge in that excess; he avoided the violet ink shade, and imparted instead a harmonious warmth which consorts with the golden whiteness of the linen of the collars. The defects in Delaroche's painting are not visible in the engraving, which exhibits merely the skilful arrangement of the composition.

In his "Saint Cecilia" Paul Delaroche seems to have felt the influence of Ingres, or rather, of the old Italian masters. He has filled in with light colour the clearly drawn contours, but he possesses neither the purity of drawing, the delicacy of modelling, nor the Gothic artlessness, which are the real charm of these archaic imitations; he cannot interest by the expression of beauty alone, he needs a subject, a scene. The angels which support the organ on which rest the ecstatic saint's fingers, are merely pretty; they lack the seraphic idealism of the figures painted by Angelo da Fiesole, Perugino, and Giovanni Bellini. But on the other hand, the drawing which he made,

tinted in pastel, for a stained-glass window, and which represents Saint Amelia offering her crown to the Virgin, is charming and worthy in every respect of being engraved by Calamatta.

It is to this period that belongs the "Young Italian and her Child." Paul Delaroche here attempted style and line. He sought to attain to the severe contour and the virile bistre colouring of the great masters of the Roman school. This painting exhibits some striking qualities, but, as I have already said, such subjects, which are excellent for thorough painters, do not suit Delaroche; they are not significant enough.

"A Mother's Choice" is painted in a dry, conventional fashion. The auburn hair, bound with cherry-coloured ribbons, that falls in waves upon rosy flesh, denotes the desire to attain a harmony which a Venetian would have secured without difficulty, but which is dulled by the brush of a painter who is less of a colourist.

The "Marie Antoinette in Prison" sins through the abuse of black of which I spoke just now. Black, like red, green, blue, — like any other colour, — has lights, half-tints, and shades; it does not make an absolutely opaque spot amid surrounding objects, it is

connected with them by reflections, by the distribution of light, by breaks, or else it makes a hole in the painting. The Queen's head is very beautiful and full of dignity. The artist has ventured to paint her with her hair prematurely turned white, her eyes reddened by tears, her face discoloured and weary. I can only regret that a weak, boneless, unarticulated hand should press against the skirt a white handkerchief which looks like a flake of foam. Among the faces half in shadow which crowd in the narrow passage as the Queen goes by, some expressing pity and others hatred, some bestial indifference and others stupid curiosity, there are well-observed and well-rendered types. The acute feeling for the dramatic which is characteristic of Delaroche betrays itself in that admirably grouped multitude.

The idea of representing Napoleon riding on a mule was bound to attract and did attract the ingenious artist in search of incidents, details, and anecdotes. Personally I prefer David's epic conception, but the crowd is delighted with this fac-simile, for it must have been just in this way that the hero crossed the Alps, just in that dress, and led by a guide through snow which, as it fell away, did not allow the names of Hannibal and Cæsar to be seen inscribed on the rocks.

The head of "Napoleon at Fontainebleau" is a good likeness and is wrought with some style and force, but you may be sure that the vulgar chiefly admire the mud stains on the imperial boots. Whom are we to blame, the painter or the vulgar crowd?

The last paintings of Delaroche show immense progress. His "Girondins" is excellent. Within the proportions of a *genre* painting, the artist has managed to give us a real historical composition without any emphasis, rhetoric, affectation, or sham poetry. He has overcome with infinite taste the difficulties presented by the costume of the time; he has given the proper likeness to every head, the proper expression, the proper manners, so to speak. As for "The Christian Martyr," there is on that pale face lighted by the halo, a reflection of the grace of Correggio. The small, intimate dramas of the Passion, although they may be reproached with lowering divine suffering to the level of humanity, are full of sentiment, of a tender, vague colour, of emotional effect, of suave touches, and prove that the artist was entering into a new sphere just as he was stopped by death. A number of pencil sketches, some brought out by pastel, deserve to be mentioned with praise. They are genu-

ine, masterly drawings, to which colour could add nothing and which it might very well spoil.

M. Goupil's portrait is famous, and that of M. Thiers is greatly lauded, but I prefer to both of those the portrait of M. E. Pereire. The face is amazingly well modelled, with its gray harmony, and the hands are perhaps the best studied out ever painted by Delaroche.

On leaving the exposition I passed into the Hemicycle where the prizes are awarded. A great mural painting spreads under the cupola, lighted by a soft, uniform light. Henriquel-Dupont's engraving made this beautiful composition so familiar to every one that it is unnecessary to describe it. Mural painting has the advantage of enlarging the manner of artists, as if painting became more robust when it comes in contact with stone. Paul Delaroche, without equalling the style of the painters whose portraits he had so vigorously grouped upon the marble benches of that ideal academy, exhibits here unmistakable qualities of drawing and colour. But how greatly superior is the modified reduction to the original.

And now, what will be Paul Delaroche's place in the future? He will be in painting what Casimir Delavigne is in poetry.

ARY SCHEFFER

BORN IN 1795 — DIED IN 1858

YOUNG men will have to work harde to make greater efforts in order to ma France in the leading position whic holds in the arts. They have to fill up many a in the sacred phalanx, for death seems to pre strike down the most famous. He who was private yesterday, is now a captain. Let him re ber that he has to maintain the honour of the But alas! such is life, and as Glaucus said so centuries ago, —

"As the leaves from the wood, so vanish the races o The wind casts down and dries the leaves, but in the come other leaves and other buds. Thus with manki the one comes, the other goes."

I did not know Ary Scheffer personally, and I it, for he was one of the most remarkable figures age, which posterity will count among the clima epochs of human genius. But the stream of life

me elsewhere, and that face is lacking in my Pantheon. Those who saw him tell me that he had a fine romantic head, as passionate and as deep-marked as one might imagine Faust's to have been, a dark complexion, silvered in later years by long locks of white hair and tufts of gray beard, with a dreamy, melancholy, spiritual expression, entirely in harmony with his talent. He looked what he was expected to look like, which is a rare thing, and people did not say of him as of other artists no less great, "I fancied he looked differently."

The first appearance of Ary Scheffer took place at the period of glorious Renaissance which saw rise at one and the same time Eugène Devéria, Bonnington, Eugène Delacroix, Louis Boulanger, Decamps, Roqueplan, Saint-Evre, Poterlet, Paul Huet, Cabat, Théodore Rousseau, David d'Angers, Préault, and so many other fiery champions of liberty in art. Ary Scheffer was one of the first to break with the old academic traditions — his German origin made Romanticism come easily and naturally to him. All minds were then turned towards Greece, which was fighting to conquer its independence; every poet, every painter testified to this generous preoccupation by a song, or by a painting. Ary Scheffer painted the "Women of

Suli." You remember that these heroines, in order to escape the brutality of Ali Pacha's men, threw themselves from the top of a cliff. It was a fine subject for a painting. Ary Scheffer treated it with a fire of colour and a freedom of touch much more surprising at that time than now, and introduced into it at the same time, a passionate grace, a pathetic sentimentality which even now may be admired.

Like many masters Ary Scheffer had two manners, but the first has almost no relation to the second, and might be that of another painter. In his first manner he sought for colour effects, used bitumen to excess, and worked with rough touches, so that his paintings preserved the appearance of sketches. He seemed to prefer poetry, inspiration, and feeling to laborious correctness. He was, to use a term the meaning of which was more clearly understood formerly than nowadays, a real Romanticist painter; he had cast away the old, trite models used by the school of David, would have nothing to do with mythology, but borrowed his subjects from Goethe, Byron, Bürger, and the old German legends. In a word, he was orthodox in heresy. What distinguished him from his rivals, who were more exclusively painters than he, is that he

did not turn to his palette when excited directly by the sight of things; he seemed to warm himself up by reading the poets, and then to seek for forms which would express his literary impressions. Instead of looking at nature directly, he contemplated her reflection in a masterpiece. He saw with his mind's eye Marguerite traversing the drama of "Faust;" very possibly he would not have noticed her had he met her in the street. This defect, if it be one, harmonised too well with the passionate fondness for the reading of poets then felt by a young public not to have been reckoned a merit in the artist, who thus realised types dear to every one.

I remember the effect produced by his first "Marguerite," for Ary Scheffer painted quite a number. This was a half-length seated figure, in an attitude of sorrowful meditation. Her pale, fair hair was dressed in bandeaux upon her delicate temples, slightly veined with azure; on the upper part of the forehead there was a touch of silver light which was prolonged to and vanished on the edge of the profile. The rest of the head, melting and, as it were, etherealised within an azure shadow, resembling the light of German moonbeams, disappeared, vanished,

became idealised like the remembrance of a dream, through which shone the glance of an eye as blue as a forget-me-not. It was the shadow of a shade, and yet full of morbid charm, of sickly voluptuousness, of passionate languor. No doubt the neck was too long and too thin, more like a bird's than a woman's; the veins of the slender, almost transparent hands, were too blue; but a soul lived within the body itself, faintly indicated on the background, felt more than painted, and the light of the soul, like that of a lamp, illumined the picture with marvellous beauty. It was, at one and the same time, Marguerite and German poetry, a translation of Goethe more accurate in its vague fluidity than the literary translations of Stappfer, Gérard, and Henri Blaze, and the youth of the day was intoxicated with this new enchantment, and refused to listen to the morose critics who protested in the name of osteology, myology, and sound doctrine. His "Faust" also was greatly admired, and rightly. "The Giaour," whom Eugène Delacroix had represented in the battle with the terrible Hassan, with a fury of motion and a splendour of colour which he probably never surpassed, was also painted by Ary Scheffer, but in an entirely different fashion, as the solitary embodiment of Byronian poetry:

"His floating robe around him folding,
Slow sweeps he through the columned aisle;
With dread beheld, with gloom beholding
The rites that sanctify the pile.
But when the anthem shakes the choir,
And kneel the monks, his steps retire;
By yonder lone and wavering torch
His aspect glares within the porch;
There will he pause till all is done —
And hear the prayer, but utter none.
See — by the half-illumined wall
His hood fly back, his dark hair fall,
That pale brow wildly wreathing round,
As if the Gorgon there had bound
The sablest of the serpent-braid
That o'er her fearful forehead strayed;
For he declines the convent oath,
And leaves those locks' unhallowed growth."

Never was there a finer illustration — I use this word purposely — made of a poetic type.

Let me also recall "Leonora" watching from the city gates the passage of the army in which she misses her lover. The painter, no doubt in the interest of costume, indulged in a slight anachronism and put back two or three centuries the time of the fantastic story told in Bürger's ballad, but Leonora's face exhibited

the liveliest grief, and the painting had a most romantic charm.

"The King of Thule" and "Eberhard the Weeper" also belong to this first period. The pale sweet head of the young man lying in his armour was greatly admired. Rarely had death appeared more graceful, and in presence of the picture one recalled Byron's verses at the beginning of "The Giaour," on the supreme beauty which precedes the moment of decomposition in people who have died a violent death.

At that time Ary Scheffer appears to have felt the influence which induced him to change his manner. No doubt every master, when he has reached the maturity of his talent, stops, looks back over the road he has traversed, and recollects himself; he feels it necessary to come to a decision; according to his temperament, he grows calmer or more fiery; he holds himself in or he pushes on. Some remain on the plateau, others start to climb a higher summit. If the crisis is not to prove fatal, the artist who feels admiration for another must not renounce his own powers, and must not seek perfection outside of the means at his disposal. Certainly Ingres is a model who may be safely offered to young students. He

possesses the great traditions of art, the feeling for antiquity, drawing, style, but I think he is dangerous to talents already formed. In my opinion Ary Scheffer thought too much of this great artist. His "Marguerite coming out of Church" showed in the work of the painter, who until then had been Romanticist, a somewhat dry, clean outline, not justified by sufficient accuracy. "Faust beholding the Phantom of Marguerite in the Witches' Sabbath" is conceived in the same style: the colour, as pale as a wash, is contained by sharp lines. The subject, it seems to me, required more mystery, and the white shade which bears on the neck a red streak as broad as the back of a knife, would have been improved by less distinctness. Regretting his early neglect of line, Ary Scheffer tried to become a draughtsman, but one cannot go in later life from colour to drawing, which requires a particular temperament and long years of work at the age when a man studies, and not at that when he performs. For a man to do a thing, he must first know it; there is no longer time to learn, and Ary Scheffer was wrong to abandon, at the flood tide of his reputation, the vague, soft, graceful, morbid manner that was personal to him and which so admirably interpreted his ideas,

which were more literary than plastic. By the change he lost colour, chiaroscuro, and his own touch, while he did not acquire line. Yet his success was maintained, because Ary Scheffer could not renounce his own style. "Francesca and Paolo" passing against the black background of hell like two wounded doves, captivated the attention of the public, which understood the poetical thought only, and did not take note of the meagre drawing and modelling. "Mignon mourning her country" and "Mignon aspiring to Heaven" are unlike the living, real, feminine and not at all celestial type described by Goethe in "Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship and Travel," and it is difficult to recognise in that melancholy, over-spiritualised figure the ardent nostalgia of the precocious little girl who performed a country dance in a page's dress and slipped at night into the room of the beloved Wilhelm, though not on a moonbeam. Yet Ary Scheffer's "Mignon" has been so completely accepted that it has little by little taken the place of the poet's creation, and that a real portrait of her would now be considered unlike by every one, even if it whispered with true Southern passion, "Know'st thou the land where the orange blooms?"

ARY SCHEFFER

In his "Christus Remunerator" Ary Scheffer made a supreme effort to rise to style. The composition is well ordered, the idea, though humanitarian rather than religious, was capable of suggesting fine motives to a painter. But with our artist the hand often failed to carry out the purpose, and here the intention is greater than the performance. "Dante and Beatrix," "Saint Augustine and Saint Monica," perpetuate his system of lengthening which causes the body to disappear under the stiff folds of draperies in order to bring out strongly a head, frail and sickly in its beauty, which looks up to heaven.

But this is not the time to discuss technically the work of the famous artist who has just gone down to the grave. Ary Scheffer leaves a reputation which will be increased by the admirable engravings of his work, for these reproduce his qualities merely. The graver excels in rendering the thought in a picture, and Ary Scheffer's paintings are pure thought only. Let Ingres, Delacroix, Decamps, all the well rounded, robust painters be preferred to him, — that is right; yet Ary Scheffer's place is not to be disdained. He was the Novalis of painting; if he did not possess an artist's temperament, he had an artist's soul. His life, a most

honourable one, was filled with noble aspirations only; faith, thought, work, gratitude, occupied him until the last instant. Let me add one last word. Ary Scheffer was a transposed poet. Dante, Goethe, and Byron were his masters, rather than Michael Angelo, Raphael, or Titian. He painted in accord with their conceptions, perhaps he ought to have sung like them.

HORACE VERNET

BORN IN 1789 — DIED IN 1865

I SHALL not trouble with biographical details. All I know of the man is his work, and that I am going to speak of, — its meaning, its value, its individuality; for an account of the paintings produced by that indefatigable worker would require a whole volume, and not a mere article.

It is remarkable that Horace Vernet did not take sides in any of the burning questions of art which so deeply stirred the earlier years of the present century. He was claimed neither by the school of style nor by that of colour he always escaped the hyperbolical praises and the acrimonious insults which the two parties lavished on each other in those days. In the midst of the tumult he peacefully enjoyed a popularity which the chiefs of the rival schools, in spite of their undoubted genius and the efforts of their followers, never attained. The multitude did not need to be initiated before it could understand him. He was readily com-

prehended, for he possessed a very rare quality which pedants do not prize much, the vision of modern things. Nothing seems easier than to paint what one constantly sees. Well, that is an error which can be proved by strolling through a gallery of paintings. It is surprising to notice how little the illustrious painters of all ages, of all countries, have, outside of a few portraits, succeeded in reproducing the aspect of their times and of their environments. The imitation of antiquity, the striving after idealism or style, the superb disdain which historical painting manifests for reality, the taste for composition and transposition, fashionable mannerisms, almost always draw artists away from present-day subjects, which they take up apparently with regret and which they generally misrepresent.

So the painter who devotes himself to the faithful representation of contemporary facts requires very peculiar courage, a predisposition to genius, for he has no precedents and no models other than those which reality offers him. If a painter wishes to depict the battle of Hercules and Antæus, he can turn to statues, to medals, to gems, to engravings, to paintings, to a whole academic tradition; but these resources are wholly lacking if it is a question of

painting a fight between a veteran of the Old Guard and a Cossack.

Although he does not draw the eye by any peculiarities, yet no one is more original than Horace Vernet. He owes nothing to antiquity; the Greeks and the Romans do not seem to have existed as far as he was concerned. It is impossible to compare him with the battle painters who preceded him. He resembles neither Raphael in "The Battle of Constantine," nor Lebrun in "The Conquests of Alexander," nor Salvator Rosa, nor Bourguignon, nor Van der Meulen, nor Gros, the epic painter of Aboukir and Eylau. In his battle work perhaps he recalls faintly Carl Vernet, but that is allowable in a son.

Horace Vernet's glory is the result of his having dared, first and foremost, to paint a modern battle, not an episode of a fight, — that is, a dozen warriors sabring each other in the foreground, upon rearing horses which trample under foot the classical wounded soldier, — but a real collision of two armies, with their lines deployed or concentrating, the artillery galloping the batteries thundering, the staffs and the ambulances, on some vast plain, the natural chessboard of great strategic combinations. He understood that

the modern hero is that collective Achilles which is called a regiment.

Instead of mourning the ugliness of our costumes, which are so rebellious to picturesqueness, Horace Vernet quietly accepted the man dressed in modern garb. In his work the coat took the place of the much regretted torso, the cloak with its collar did not seem to him inferior to the pallium of antiquity, and as there were no cothurns, he blacked jack-boots. He knew uniforms as thoroughly as a clothing officer; the army clothing stores gave up all their secrets to him. He was accurately acquainted with the number of buttons, the colour of the braiding, the cut of the skirts and facings, the stamping of the shako plates, with the proper way to strap haversacks, to cross belts, with the cocks of the muskets, the grenades or the horns upon cartridge boxes, with long and short gaiters, with fatigue dress and full dress; and better than all with the appearance of the soldier by the camp fire or under fire, with his usual characteristic attitudes, with the foot-soldier's shrug of the shoulders, with the dragging walk of the cavalryman, with the special type of each arm or of each campaign. No one better than he reproduced the military *chic* of a particular time, — if

I may be forgiven that piece of studio slang, which is not an academical expression, it is true, but which renders my meaning.

Having painted the soldier of the Republic and of the Empire, and preserved his special characteristics, he assimilated just as easily the soldier of the African army whom he painted with an accuracy of type, colour, and go which was never once at fault. And it is perhaps just as meritorious to bring out the characteristic traits of an army as to imitate a Syracusan medal.

In order to paint battles, a man must be able to paint horses. Many artists of talent have failed in this respect. The horse is, next to man, the most difficult creature to represent correctly. It possesses a complicated anatomy which calls for prolonged study; its paces, half natural and half acquired, are really understood by a thorough horseman only, and to show the horse moving under the rider without misrepresenting the seat or the gait is a perilous undertaking for any one who has not long been familiar with stables, riding-schools, drill-grounds, and battle-fields.

In this, as in everything else, Horace Vernet owed nothing to tradition. He did not paint the heavy, historical horse of monstrous proportions with which art

was satisfied in the days when the importance given to the human figure caused accessories to be neglected; nor did he set his dragoons and cuirassiers, like the white cavalry of the Parthenon, upon the noble animals with swelling necks and hog manes which are carved in Pentelic marble. He actually was bold enough to represent modern horses, their breed, gait, and characteristics. They certainly have not the poetic beauty of the steeds painted by Gros, nor the vigour of those whose muscles Géricault interwove under a shimmering, veiny skin; but they are irreproachable from the horseman's point of view, and the artist shows them dashing forward, held in, spurred on, rearing, galloping, leaping hedges, falling to the ground, coming head on, in profile, from behind, foreshortened, in the air, — in every possible pose, in a word, with the ease, the rapidity, and the certainty of a man for whom there are no such things as difficulties.

To all these qualities, which are indispensable to a battle painter, he united a keen feeling for the topography of a landscape; he could reproduce exactly the lay of the ground on which had been fought great battles, the subjects of his paintings, while preserving the aspect of nature and the picturesque effect. And as a man

does thoroughly well only what he is fond of, he adored war; in him the artist was partly a soldier. One of his paintings represents fairly well this double character. It represents his studio. In one corner there is a horse in a loose box; weapons of all kinds are hanging on the walls; some of the pupils are fencing; an idler sounds the charge, another is drumming; a model is posing on the table, and the painter, in front of his easel, is working peacefully in the midst of the noise, which he enjoys, for Horace Vernet was endowed with extraordinary facility. When he started to paint on a fresh canvas, you could have sworn that he was uncovering a subject already painted and covered over with tissue paper, so infallible was the rapidity with which the various portions came out under his brush. His prodigious memory for things almost saved him the trouble of making sketches; it drew in the *camera obscura* of his brain whatever was reflected in it: the silhouette of a town, the profile of a soldier, the shape of a utensil, the detail of a costume, the arabesque form of a braiding, the number on a button, the handle of a yataghan, an Arab saddle, a Kabyle mosque, — and he drew all his information from that unfailing portfolio, which he did not even need to open and to run through.

With his very first paintings, "The Trumpeter's Horse," "The Regimental Dog," which were followed by the battles of "Jemmappes," "Valmy" "Hanau," "Montmirail," and "The Clichy Toll Gate," Horace Vernet conquered his public. People admired his thoroughly French qualities, — cleverness, clearness, ease, accuracy. The subjects which he preferred to treat were bound to charm a nation in whom the military feeling has always been so strong. The African campaigns provided him with vast compositions such as "The Taking of Constantine," "The Battle of Isly," "The Smalah," in which his fully developed talent shows most brilliantly. These works, of a size not usually attempted by painters, have something of the illusion and of the magic effect produced by panoramas, and the artist has carried in them to a very high degree the power of illusion, a secondary merit, doubtless, but one not to be despised and which greatly impresses the public. "The Smalah," in which are exhibited the peculiarities of Arab life caught in picturesque disorder by a sudden invasion, with its charming barbaric luxury thrown under the horses' hoofs, offered an admirable opportunity to the painter to vary by means of piquant contrasts the regulation monotony of

uniforms. Horace Vernet, without being a brilliant colourist like Eugène Delacroix, turned to very good account the quaint weapons, the gold-striped stuffs, the coffers inlaid with mother-of-pearl, the silver-sheathed *kandjars*, the multi-coloured *atatiches*, — a sort of palanquin in which Oriental jealousy conceals its women when travelling. A silvery, clear tone, such as is produced by the white African light, illuminates this long, frieze-like canvas, which remains one of the artist's best works.

Algeria also inspired Horace with biblical subjects for a few easel paintings, in which the characters of the Old Testament are clothed in Arab burnouses, as more probable than the classical costume in which the great masters have clothed them. The unchanging East preserves its customs almost eternally, and the patriarchs could not have been very different from modern Bedouins ; but this change, in spite of its archæological probability, proved unpleasant to eyes accustomed to the conventional draperies and ornaments of vague origin in which art has always clothed these respectable and distinguished figures. The Bedouin quaintness is not very objectionable, however, in such subjects as " Thamar " or " Rebecca and Eleazar."

"Swan-necked Edith," "Judith and Holofernes," "Raphael meeting Michael Angelo on the Steps of the Vatican," "The Pope borne by the Segestaria," belong to the historical style of painting properly so-called, and in them the individual qualities of the artist have been unable to display themselves as freely as in his other works. His clean, rapid, facile manner does not make up for the lack of style.

Never was a reputation so widespread as that of Horace Vernet, who is better known to foreigners than any painter of our modern school, while his works fetch large prices abroad. His well filled career has lacked no form of glory, and he closes in triumphal fashion the illustrious dynasty of the Vernets. Of an eminently French nature, made to delight the French, he will live with Scribe, Auber, and Béranger.

EUGÈNE DELACROIX

BORN IN 1798 — DIED IN 1863

EUGÈNE DELACROIX was scarcely sixty-five, and he looked younger, for his thick black hair had not a single silver thread in it. He was not robust, but his fine, energetic, and nervous temperament gave promise of longer life. Intellectual strength made up for physical strength in him, and he was thus able to indulge in ceaseless activity. No career was better filled out than his own, although it was broken off so abruptly. Delacroix lived as long as Titian, if his years are reckoned by his works. He was a pupil of Guérin, the painter of "Dido" and "Clytemnestra," who had also Géricault and Ary Scheffer for pupils. He exhibited for the first time at the Salon of 1822. The picture was his "Dante and Virgil," which his master, startled by the tremendous dash of the work, advised him not to send in. This picture, which broke away so abruptly from academic tradition, called out enthusiastic praise on the one hand and vio-

lent opposition on the other, and marked the opening of that long battle which lasted as long as the artist lived.

The Romanticist movement, spreading from poetry into art, adopted Eugène Delacroix and defended him against the attacks of the rival camp. M. Thiers, who was then the art critic on the "Constitutionnel," wrote about this picture, so much praised and so much criticised, these remarkable lines: "At the sight of this painting, I am filled with an indefinable remembrance of the great masters. I find in it that wild, ardent, but natural power which yields without effort to its own impulse." As a matter of fact, Eugène Delacroix was henceforth a master. He was no one's imitator, and, without having to grope, he had entered into possession of his own individuality. Whatever his detractors may say, he did introduce into French painting a new element, — colour, in the widest meaning of the word. The "Massacre of Scio," which was exhibited in the Salon of 1824, filled up the measure of the wrath of the Classical school. That scene of desolation, reproduced in its full horror without a thought of conventionality, — such, in a word, as it must have occurred, — evoked an outburst of fury which it is difficult to understand to-day when one marks the

passion, the depth of sentiment, the intensely brilliant colour, the thoroughly free and vigorous execution of the painting. From that day, the jury often refused the paintings of the innovating artist, but Eugène Delacroix was not a man easily discouraged; he returned to the charge with the obstinacy of a man who is conscious of his own genius. "The Death of the Doge Marino Faliero," "Christ in the Garden of Olives," "Faust and Mephistopheles," "Justinian," "Sardanapalus," "The Battle of the Giaour and the Pacha," followed each other amid a storm of praise and insults.

To Delacroix was applied the epithet invented for Shakespeare, "drunken savage," and assuredly nothing better could be invented to mark an artist brought up in the intimate frequentation of ancient and modern poets, one who is a writer himself, a passionate dilettante, a man of the world, a charming talker, cultivated, with the keenest feeling for harmony.

After the Revolution of 1830, Eugène Delacroix painted "Liberty guiding the People on the Barricades," as a replica of Auguste Barbier's famous iambics. Then came the "Massacre of the Bishop of Liege," "The Tigers," "Boissy d'Anglas," "The Battle of Nancy," the "Women of Algiers," — a mar-

vellously varied, poetic, passionate, richly coloured series of works which I need not detail at greater length in these few lines.

Better understood and better received, Eugène Delacroix was enabled to turn his great and mighty talent to the decoration of large surfaces. He was commissioned to paint the Throne Room and the Library of the Chamber of Deputies, the cupola of the Peers' Library, the ceiling of the gallery of Apollo, a hall in the Hôtel de Ville, and finally the Chapel of the Holy Angels at Saint-Sulpice. No one better understood mural and decorative painting than he did; he exhibited qualities of the highest order in composition, and covered the buildings intrusted to his brush with a magnificent vestment flat in tone like a fresco and as velvety as tapestry. His great works did not prevent his still sending to the Salon numerous masterpieces: "Saint Sebastian," "The Battle of Taillebourg," "Medea," "The Convulsionists of Tangiers," "A Jewish Wedding in Morocco," "The Boat of Don Juan," "Trajan's Justice," "The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople," "The Rape of Rebecca," "The Ascent of Calvary," and many another painting, the meanest of which bears the unmistakable mark of the master.

EUGÈNE DELACROIX

The Universal Exposition in 1855 proved a veritable triumph for Delacroix; his collected works appeared in all their splendour. The most obstinate opponents of his glory could not resist this harmonious, brilliant, splendid collection of compositions so varied, so full of fire and genius. The artist received the highest award, and was appointed a commander in the Legion of Honour. Yet this great master, whose colour stands comparison with that of Titian, Paul Veronese, Rubens, and Rembrandt, was not elected a member of the Institute before 1858.

Eugène Delacroix was fortunate enough to be a prey to the fever of his time, and to represent its excited ideas with singular poetry, force, and intensity. He drew his inspiration from Shakespeare, Goethe, Byron, and Walter Scott, but freely, like a master who finds a work within a work, and who remains the equal of those whom he translates. Eckermann has recorded the admiring words of the Weimar Jove, when, at over eighty years of age, he looked over the illustrations to "Faust." The German poet had never understood his work so well as when he saw it reproduced in the lithographs of the young French master.

HIPPOLYTE FLANDRIN

BORN IN 1809 — DIED IN 1864

HIPPOLYTE FLANDRIN kept constantly within the high sphere of art, and the proofs of his genius are to be sought for on the walls of churches. He was wholly worthy to have sanctuaries for studios, for never was a more religious inspiration sustained by purer, juster, and more elevated talent than his. The beloved and fervent disciple of an austere master, towards whom he always remained in the attitude of a pupil, although he had attained to glory for many a year, he incessantly strove to realise the ideal he had learned from his teaching. He was not satisfied with seeking the beautiful, he wanted to express holiness; the purified human form was constantly used by him to render the divine idea. There was in him something of the tender timidity, the virginal delicacy, and the seraphic etherealness of Fra Beato Angelico, but the simplicity of his sentiment was backed by deep knowledge.

Practically and genuinely pious, he brought into religious painting an element exceedingly rare in these days, — faith. He believed sincerely in what he painted, and did not try to realise the desired situation by factitious enthusiasm; he was in his element, it was the air which he breathed; he soared in it with well trained and confident wing. No modern painter has come nearer the old masters without falling into archaic imitation.

Every one remembers the sensation produced in 1832 by his "Theseus recognised by his Father at the Banquet," which won the grand prize of Rome, and which already proved that the young painter possessed well developed and promising talent. Hippolyte Flandrin painted during his stay in Italy, at greater or less intervals, "Saint Clare healing the Blind," "Æschylus writing his Tragedies," "Dante in the Circle of the Envious," "Jesus and Little Children." On his return to Paris he painted the "Saint Louis dictating his Orders," the "Mater Dolorosa," "Napoleon Legislator," and several other meritorious works. But in spite of the art which he exhibited in these, it may be affirmed that he had not yet found his real line, — mural and religious painting. The Chapel of Saint

John, in the Church of Saint-Séverin, is notable for the austere simplicity, the masterly sobriety, and the neglect of empty effects which are characteristic of painting associated with architecture and forming one with it. Never, perhaps, did the artist draw more admirably and firmly. Unfortunately the inferior quality of the material has damaged these noble compositions in several places, and before long they will have scaled away and vanished. The vast frieze of Saint-Vincent de Paul, on which passes the long procession of all the characters in the "Golden Legend," the martyred saints, the holy confessors, the blessed virgins, has won the name of Christian Pantheon by the beauty of the style, the rhythm of the groups, the arrangement of the figures. It is indeed Greek art christianised, and which would do honour to the Frieze of the Parthenon if the building were changed to a church. Saint-Germain-des-Prés received from Hippolyte Flandrin a vestment of admirable paintings which cover the choir and the Romanesque nave in such a way that one no longer regrets their ancient splendour. The indefatigable artist, forgetful of the fact that his labour, greater than human strength could bear, was draining away his life, painted also the church of Saint-

Paul at Nîmes and the apse of the church of Ainay at Lyons, — his masterpiece, say the pious visitors who are fortunate enough to have seen it.

Let me add that Hippolyte Flandrin was, like all great masters, like Albert Dürer, Holbein, Titian, Velasquez, an excellent portrait painter. It is sufficient to recall, among his more recent portraits, those of Count Walewski, Prince Napoleon, and the Emperor, which are so masterly and so admirable in likeness. Into the portraits of women he introduced a modest grace, an exquisite distinction, a peaceful serenity, the effect of which was both deep and irresistible. No one better painted the portraits of honest women and in a more chaste and reserved fashion. How great was the success of that delightful portrait of a young girl holding a flower in her hand, called "The Young Girl with the Carnation," just as one speaks of Raphael's madonnas as the "Madonna with the Veil," or the "Madonna della Sedia!" The gentle painter with the angelic name would willingly sign that charming canvas of the purest of his admirers if he could return to life.

GAVARNI

BORN IN 1801 — DIED IN 1866

THE ancient world still so masters us from the depth of the ages that we scarcely have the feeling of our surrounding civilisation. In spite of the efforts of Paris and London, Athens and Rome remain the capitals of thought. Every year there issue from colleges thousands of young Greeks and Romans who know nothing of modern affairs. More than any one I admire the persistent force of thought, the eternal power of beauty; but is it not strange that art should reflect contemporary times so little? Classical studies inspire a profound disdain for modern manners, habits, and customs, which are so rarely reproduced on monuments, statues, *bassi-relievi*, medals, paintings, furniture, and bronzes that future chroniclers will find it very difficult to restore them or to reproduce them in a "Paris in the Days of Napoleon III." What idea, for instance, could people have, in the year 3000, of

our fashionable ladies, of our famous beauties, those we love and for whom we have indulged in greater or less follies, even if the larger portion of the works of our masters had not then disappeared?

Ingres is an Athenian, a pupil of Apelles and Phidias, whose soul has evidently mistaken its age and come into the world twenty-four hundred years too late. His paintings might be placed in the Pinacothek of the Propylæa; his portraits, antique in style and of no particular time, become eternal. Delacroix scarcely touches a subject outside of history, the East, or Shakespeare; scarcely among his numerous works does one come across a contemporary type; without going back to antiquity like Ingres, he goes back to the Venetians and the Flemings, and is modern in his nervousness and passion only. He has composed his own microcosm by a sort of internal vision, and one could swear that he had not once looked around him. What I say of these two illustrious masters, who with us represent the two sides of art, is equally true of all the others. The realistic attempts made in these latter days seek an ugly ideal rather than the accurate reproduction of nature. The few true types of genre paintings are almost all taken from the rustic classes;

and it may be said in perfect security that neither the men nor the women of the world, nor almost any of the numerous members of the society of the nineteenth century have left any trace in the higher art of our day.

Unquestionably the Venus of Milo is a wonderful statue, lovingly polished by the kisses of centuries; it has the supremest beauty, it is the most perfect effort of human genius to express the ideal, and I myself worship that sublime torso, the divinity of which no one can deny. But have not Parisian women their charms? Could not sculpture, if it chose to do so, discover the fair lines of their elegant bodies under the cashmere, the fold of which outlines the roundest neck and which with its fringe kisses the heel of a pretty shoe? The drapery of Polyhymnia clings in no more supple manner than these great Indian shawls to the shoulders and the backs of well-bred women. Henri Heine, who so thoroughly understood plasticity, was not mistaken on this point. He would follow a woman draped in her shawl as if she were a Greek goddess in a Parian *chlamyd*. As for Balzac, he certainly preferred to all the female deities of Olympus, even to Venus "adorably exhausted," as Goethe says,

Madame Firmiani, Madame de Beauséant, Madame de Mortsauf, the Duchess de Maufrigneuse, the Princess Cadignan, Lady Dudley, Madame Marneffe, even, perhaps. Are these lovely faces, of a rosy pallor, framed in by their pretty bonnets like angels' heads smiling in an ideal flower, with wavy or smooth hair which Praxiteles himself would not disturb if he had to copy them in marble, — are they unworthy of being reproduced in a medal? Does not the dressing of the hair for a ball afford an intelligent artist every possible resource, — pearls, flowers, feathers, sprays, nets, knots, bands, shining bandeaux, long curls, fluffy crimps, heavy chignons twisted like the horn of Ammon, or negligently tied? The dresses, in spite of the passing exaggeration of flounces and of crinoline, appear, by the richness of the brocade, of the watered silk, of the satin, and by the *frou-frou* of the taffeta, the transparency of the lace, of the gauze, of the tulle, of the tarletan, the brilliancy and the suaveness and the variety of the tones, to invite a colourist's brush and to offer to him a palette of seductive tints. But the colourist does not look at these bouquets of tone which bloom at promenades, at parties, at receptions, in the boxes at the theatres; he prefers to dip his brush into

the red gold of Rembrandt, the mat silver of Paul Veronese, or the blazing purple of Rubens; while the sculptor strips of her garments on some public square a shivering nymph, who is ashamed and dismayed at finding herself nude.

Leaving the Greeks and the Romans on one side, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Titian have preserved the beauties of their day, eternal memories, which poets gaze at dreamily in the galleries, their hearts filled with an irresistible retrospective desire. There is scarce a woman of mark of the sixteenth century, princess or courtesan, grand duke's or painter's mistress, whose image has not come down to us made divine by art. Our day will hand down nothing of the sort to future ages. Our artists seem to dread women. The fear of falling into a false classical idea has urged them to be vigorous and characteristic and to seek violent effects; few have troubled themselves about modern beauty. To find traces of it, the future will have to consult the portraits painted by certain fashionable artists who sought rather to satisfy the taste of society people than to fulfil the strict requirements of art, — painters such as Winterhalter, Dubuffe, father and son, Pérignon, and some others.

It seems to me that Vidal, if he had not let himself drift into graceful and coquettish fancies, could have rendered the impression of delicate beauty and of dainty elegance which a society woman setting out for a ball and drawing on her gloves before her mirror makes upon one.

This preamble, which may strike the reader as somewhat long, is intended to bring out fully the originality of Gavarni and the value of his work, scattered in books and albums, in collections and detached engravings. He has no predecessor or rival in our own day; he has the not slight glory of being frankly, exclusively, absolutely modern. Like Balzac, with whom he has more than one characteristic in common, he has also produced his Human Comedy, less broad and less all-embracing no doubt, but very complete in its way, although slightly exaggerated; for while the nib of the pen runs on the paper, the point of the lithographic pencil spreads on the stone. Gavarni, an admirable draughtsman and an admirable anatomist in his own way, is absolutely careless of the traditional sculptural forms; he makes men, and not statues dressed up. No one knows better than he does the wretched frame of our bodies wasted by civilisation; he is acquainted

with the leanness, the wretchedness, the bald-headedness of Parisian dandies; their grotesque stoutness, their heavy wrinkles, their big feet, their bossy knees; the bandy legs of protectors, of bankers, of so-called serious men; and he dresses up all these people just as Chevreuil or Renard might do it. With a stroke of the pencil he gives an overcoat the cut of a sack; he puts straps on a pair of trousers; he throws back the lapels of an overcoat; he opens or buttons a waistcoat; he smooths or roughens the black silk of a stovepipe hat, he puts on gloves, or sticks an eyeglass in the eye; gives a curve to the stick and makes the watch-charms rattle; gives cloth a worn or well-brushed look; makes the appearance stylish or vulgar, and gives to the elbow, to the outline, to the waist of each garment the characteristic fold which reveals affectation, habit, vice, and which relates a whole life.

If you wish to find the Parisian of 1830 nowadays, with his costume, his coat, his attitude and physiognomy, truthful and without caricature, but merely touched up with that clever stroke which is the very spirit of the artist, glance through Gavarni's work. It will soon be as full of information as the engravings of Gravelot, Eisen, Moreau, and the water-colours of

Baudoin in the last century. But Gavarni's greatest glory is not merely that he has understood the Parisian, who is considered impossible by contemporary art; he has understood the Parisian woman, and not only understood but loved her, which is the true and only way to understand. You may be sure he did not trouble much about the figures on the Parthenon, the Venus of Milo, or the Diana of Gabies, and that he discovered a very satisfying ideal in the little perky face of the Parisian woman, whose pretty ugliness is itself graceful. What if the nose is not absolutely straight, the cheeks round rather than oval, the mouth curling a little at the corners, letting the tip of the tongue show; the neck slender and lacking in its plump flesh the three folds of Aphrodite's collar, the waist too much drawn in by the corsets, making the hips stand out overmuch, — what does all that matter? It is not a nymph of antiquity that he proposes to draw, but a woman who passes by and whom you are following; he is not making lithographs from the round, but from life.

Long before Alexandre Dumas the younger, Gavarni had sketched the Lady with the Camellias, and told in his drawings and letterings the story of the *demi-monde;*

and how cleverly, with what easy dash, with what perfect good-breeding! Mademoiselle de Beauperthuis, M. Coquardeau, and Arthur have become known to everybody; they are living characters in the eternal comedy. The *lorette*, thanks to Roqueplan who christened her and Gavarni who noted her changing appearance, will go down to the most distant posterity. She is neither the Greek *hetaira*, nor the Roman courtesan, nor the impure woman of the Regency, nor the kept woman of the Empire, nor the *grisette* of the Restoration; she is the special product of our busy ways, the free-and-easy mistress of an age which has not time to fall in love and which is greatly bored at home. At her house you may smoke, stand on your head, stick your feet up on the mantelpiece, say whatever you please, even coarse pleasantries and low equivoques; you are no more restricted than among men, and you leave when you feel like it, which is the highest pleasure. And then, after all, *lorettes* are jolly girls. They have all been, more or less, supernumeraries, actresses, music teachers; they know the slang of sport, of the studio, of the stage; they can dance splendidly, play a waltz, sing a little bit, and roll a cigarette like a Spanish smuggler, — some even can actually spell; but

their chief talent is playing patience. As for their lustral toilet, the bayaderes of the Benares pagodas are not more careful to descend the white marble steps which lead to the Ganges and to wash within the sacred river. As regards their dress, it is only the thorough-bred Parisian who can tell, by some excess of luxury or some slight neglect, that it is not that of a woman of the world; foreigners are almost always taken in, even Russians, who are so very French. Sometimes they are not dressed in just the latest fashion, sometimes in the fashion which is going to be. They can wear anything, — watered silk and velvet and feathers in their bonnets, and lace capes, and boots which fit the foot, and men's cuffs and the cloth riding-habit, — everything except the long shawl; therein lies the superiority of the honest woman. No Lady with the Camellias, no Marble Heart, no *lorette* can resist the temptation of somewhat stretching the shawl with her elbows in order to show off her waist and to suggest very gently the rich outline of the hips. Gavarni understands all these shades and expresses them with the quick, easy stroke of a pencil which is always sure of what it is doing. With him we enter richly furnished boudoirs full of china vases and of old Sèvres, in

which flash Venetian mirrors and candelabra with twisted arms; where we see lying on a divan the goddess of the place, half dressed in a long wrapper with a loosened girdle, twisting her slipper at the end of her bare foot, and blowing from her rosy lips the smoke of the *papelito*, while a female friend tells her some funny stories or a gentleman who is more or less of a rider bites the tip of his stick while churning over a declaration of love. The furniture, the costumes, the accessories, the fashions, — all are rendered with perfect propriety, with intimate modernity, which no one possesses in the same degree. The gesture is correct, accurate, and especially of the day; that is just the way we rise, sit down, hold our hat, put on our gloves, bow, open and shut doors; you can see there is a living body under the overcoats, the cloaks, the frock coats, which is not always the case under the pseudo-antique draperies of historical painters. For, as I have said before, Gavarni is a great anatomist. The woman of the present day, not to be found in our paintings, lives in the historical lithographs of our artist, with her coquettish mannerism, her witty gracefulness, her dainty elegance, her problematic but irresistible beauty. And all those faces are so charming! How those eyes

flash! how delightful are those tip-tilted noses! what pretty dimples for Cupids to hide in! what well shaped chins, softly rounded above a bow of ribbon! what fresh cheeks caressed by a curl of hair! What delightful realities and what charming shams under the mass of lace, cambric, and taffeta! Certainly there are women more beautiful, nobler, and purer, and all this is not the supreme expression of feminine beauty in our day; but Gavarni has none the less reproduced one of the profiles of modern beauty. Is not Gavarni the painter and the historian of that Carnival of Paris, which only lacks the Piazza, the Piazzetta, and the Grand Canal to surpass the old-time Carnival of Venice? While that infernal gallop — a regular round of the Sabbath of Pleasure — is whirling to the sound of a tremendous orchestra, a man stands there leaning against a pillar, looking, watching, noting, and tomorrow the *débardeuses* in velvet trousers with lace flounces, broad silk girdles setting off their waists, fine cambric chemises with rosy transparencies, and their high kicking, will be reproduced upon the lithographic stone; the dominoes will whisper under the satin and lace of the mask; the white *pierrots* will wave their long sleeves, flapping their wings like penguins; the

varnished cardboard noses of serious men will be seen at full length; the bells of Folly will sparkle and tinkle; the plumes will stand up on the Roman helmets; the necklaces of civilised savages will rattle. Through the dazzling whirl, the misty light of the chandeliers, the tumult of voices and orchestra, the artist has noted every type, every turn, every face; he inspires all the masks with his wit, even if they are stupid; he sums up with a witty remark the jest of the foyer, he translates into a droll inscription the hoarse sound of the rumour; and then takes his *pierrettes*, *pierrots*, *débardeurs*, *débardeuses*, dominoes, and fashionables to the Café Anglais and the Maison Dorée and intoxicates them with his fun, which is more exhilarating and sparkling than champagne.

Who is there that is not acquainted with his "Spoiled Children," and especially with his "Spoiled Parents," — those tell everything, these take the poetry out of everything, — "What People Say and What They Think," "Masks and Faces," "Worms Will Bite," "Returned from Somewhere," and all the series, so capitally drawn, so thoroughly philosophical, which one is never tired of looking over? The explanations added to each drawing are often a comedy or a vaude-

ville in themselves; they are always as good as a maxim of La Rochefoucauld's. How many a time have composers of vaudevilles and reviews borrowed from these clever sayings! There are very few plays on which Gavarni, did he choose to do so, could not claim a royalty.

Do not suppose that because he has drawn particularly the Bohemia of pleasure and sketched the curious manners of that world into which the most austere have set foot, Gavarni lacks the moral sense. Glance through the album called "The Aged Lorettes," and you will see that his lithographic pencil punishes vice as much as does Hogarth's brush. The frayed petticoats, the worn folds of plaid skirts, the checkered handkerchiefs, the pitiful shoes that let in the water, the wan faces, hollow cheeks, sunken eyes surely compensate for the many-flounced gowns, the long cashmere shawls that fell to the ground, the bonnets and feathers, the red-heeled shoes, and all the long vanished insolent luxury. These poor girls may be forgiven for having been pretty, proud, and triumphant. May the rice powder rest lightly upon them!

"Thomas Vireloque," although somewhat misanthropical, is good company; Diogenes, Rabelais, and

Sancho Panza would nod approvingly at more than one of his aphorisms. This type, created by Gavarni, will certainly live.

In this rapid sketch I have not even endeavoured to describe the multiform work of the master; I have simply tried to mark the chief features of that artistic physiognomy, so original, so living, so modern, which criticism, too much occupied with supposedly serious talents, has not studied with the attention which it certainly deserved.

The name which Gavarni made illustrious was not his own; he was really called Sulpice-Paul Chevallier, and he had borrowed from one of his first publications that graceful pseudonym which so thoroughly suited his light, elegant, and free talent. The early part of Gavarni's career was hard, and he had turned thirty before he managed to make his mark. I knew him about that time. He was a handsome young fellow with abundant fair, curly hair, very careful in his dress, very fashionable in his attire, somewhat English in his accurate way of dressing, and having in the highest degree the feeling of modern elegance. He never worked but in a black velvet jacket, well-cut trousers with straps,

a fine cambric shirt with frill, and patent-leather shoes with red heels, — exactly as he may be seen in his portrait drawn by himself, seen from the back, on the cover of one of Hetzel's illustrated publications. He looked rather like a dandy who dabbled in art than like an artist, in the somewhat vague meaning of that word; and yet what an obstinate, what an incessant, what a fertile worker he was! An immense building might be erected with the lithographic stones upon which he has drawn.

It may be affirmed that Gavarni, although very well known, very popular, and even famous, was not fully appreciated, any more than Daumier, Raffet, and Gustave Doré, brilliant as is the reputation of the latter. The French like sterling talents, and are strangely mistrustful of fertility. How is it possible to believe in the merit of multiplied works which you come across every day either in a newspaper or in a magazine, especially when they are living, clever, drawn from our very manners, full of fire, go, and dash, original in thought, conception, and execution, owing nothing to antiquity, expressing our loves, our aversions, our tastes, our caprices, our peculiarities, showing the clothes in which we dress, the types of gracefulness

and of coquetry which please us, and the very surroundings amid which our lives are passed? All that does not seem serious, and a man who would admire a naked Ajax, a Theseus, a Philoctetes, would willingly look down upon Gavarni's Parisians.

No one knew better than Gavarni how to draw a black coat and a modern body, and that is not an easy matter. Just ask the painters of high life. Humann admired him. Under that coat the artist with three strokes of his pencil could put a human armature with accurate joints, easy movements, — a living being, in a word, capable of turning around, of coming, of going. Very often Delacroix looked with a thoughtful glance at these apparently trivial drawings that were so thoroughly true. He was surprised at the perfect posing of the figures, the cohesion of the limbs, at the attitudes so cleanly drawn, at the simple and natural mimicry. Every year made Gavarni's drawing easier, freer, and broader; neither the pencil nor the lithographic stone seemed to present any obstacles to him; he did with them as he pleased.

In that nature of his, which was so peculiarly original, there was, besides the artist and the philosopher, the writer, who in a couple of lines at the foot of his

drawings, wrote more comedies, vaudevilles, and studies of manners than all the other authors of our time taken together. Gavarni was the wit-maker of his day; most of the witticisms of these latter years have come from him; his influence, though unconfessed, has been very great. He invented a more amusing, more fantastic, and more picturesque carnival than the ancient carnival of Venice. His types are creations copied by reality, which later imitated his drawings. It is he who imparted the life of art to Bohemians, students, painters, *lorettes*; he revealed the treacheries of women, the terrible artlessness of children, what people say and what they think, not like a morose preacher, after the fashion of Hogarth, but like an indulgent moralist who is acquainted with human frailty and is forgiving to it.

And yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that Gavarni is merely graceful, witty, and elegant. His "Aged Lorettes," with their comically gloomy legends, are positively terrible. Thomas Vireloque, the tramp whose garments are torn by every bramble, casts with his one eye as clear, as deep, as single a glance upon life and humanity as ever did Rabelais, Swift, or Voltaire.

Gavarni brought back terrifying pictures, sinister

phantoms, more hideous and more painful than the visions of a nightmare, from the poor wretches he observed in Saint Giles during his stay in London.

His way of working was peculiar. He used to begin trifling on the stone without having any settled subject or plan. Little by little the figures began to show, assumed the appearance of life, and were provided with features; they went and came, busy at something or another. Gavarni listened to them, tried to make out what they were saying, just as when you see a stranger walking and gesticulating along the boulevard. Then, when he had got the correct legend, he wrote, or rather, dictated it.

For a few years past Gavarni, although still as much sought after, had somewhat given up drawing. His mind, always fond of exact sciences, was turning towards higher mathematics, and he gave himself up to the solution of difficult problems for which he found new and curious solutions. He took great pleasure in that work in which numbers grow infinitely and produce most amazing combinations. He was not one of those chimerical seekers after the squaring of the circle or perpetual motion, but a sound mathematician prized by the Institute.

GAVARNI

He died in that Auteuil villa in which I was his neighbour some twenty years ago, and the garden of which, since then cut up by the building of the railway, contained only evergreen trees, cedars, pines, hemlocks, thuyas, box, holly, green oaks, ivy, and firs, so that the sombre verdure made it look like a cemetery garden. It appears that that collection of evergreens was unrivalled, and the artist, who was also a horticulturist, prized it very highly.

DAVID D'ANGERS

BORN IN 1789 — DIED in 1856

IT is possible to collect in one's library all the works of one's favourite poet or author, for printing enables a sufficient number of copies to be struck off to satisfy all admirers. But an artist's statues and paintings, necessarily unique, are scattered, adorn distant museums, are in places which often one knows not of, are buried within some inaccessible collection, are sometimes destroyed by fire, by the action of time, by carelessness, by enmity, or in some other way. However careful one may be in following the career of a sculptor or a painter, some of his work escapes attention, and although I thought that I knew David d'Angers', I was surprised, on turning over the engravings of his works, at the great number of things new to me which it contained; for David was a hard worker. It is amazing how much clay he kneaded, how much marble he carved, how much bronze he moulded,

from 1810 to 1855; his statues are almost numerous enough to form a people.

In 1815 David was at Rome as a prize winner. His "Dying Orthryadas" had won him a second prize, and his bas-relief of "The Death of Epaminondas" was the means of sending him to the Eternal City. In spite of its necessarily classic style, the "Orthryadas" already exhibits traces of originality, and the carefully studied forms prove David's desire for truth. The bas-relief of the "Death of Epaminondas" has more life than is usually seen in that class of compositions, in which the student, in order to render his severe judges favourable to himself, seeks correctness more than any other merit.

The "Nereid bearing the Helmet of Achilles," a marble bas-relief, exhibits true Greek grace in the figure. This piece of work, which was sent from Rome and which is dated 1815, suggests that young David (then twenty-three years of age) was feeling the influence of antiquity exclusively. The masterpieces of Greek and Roman statuary must have impressed him deeply and have carried the day over his own tendencies. The Nereid, seen from behind lying on a dolphin, raises with one hand the helmet of Achilles,

and with the other holds the end of a floating drapery, the folds of which are broken and fringed like the foam curl of a wave. The line, which, springing from the bent waist, swells with the hip and is prolonged to the toe, is lovely in its elegance. As a companion to this figure, David blocked out a "Nereid bearing the Shield of Achilles," but this work was not finished, which is a pity. The pose is excellent. The nymph, bestriding a marine monster, is seen full face; her arms hold the buckler most gracefully, and her crossed feet enable her to retain her equilibrium upon the back of her steed.

The "Shepherd," sent from Rome in 1817, is a small figure, quite artless, of juvenile gracility which somewhat recalls the manner of Donatello, but the master's individual feeling does not yet manifest itself; for David was later a Romanticist sculptor within the limits of that severe and accurate art of his, the true environment of which was antiquity with its anthropomorphous polytheism. As soon as David had mastered his tools and the secrets of his art, as soon as he was able to express his idea freely, he bethought himself more of character than of beauty. The deep rhythm of Greek line appeared to him cold and even conventional; antique heads, with their serene placid-

ity, struck him as almost always wanting in expression, at least to eyes accustomed to the complications of modern life. More than any other sculptor he paid attention to the human face. For sculptors in general, the head is merely a detail of the body; the torso is quite as important, if not more so; unconsciously pagan, they do not pay sufficient attention to that transparent mask on which the soul leaves a visible trace.

David d'Angers indulged this interest of his greatly; he constantly sought the opportunity to reproduce in the shape of busts or medals contemporary celebrities. He went to Weimar to make a bust of Goethe; he made one of Chateaubriand, of Béranger, of Lamennais, of Arago, of Balzac. He delighted in noting how genius showed in the external modelling as by a sort of hammered work, marked the skull with bumps and the brow with protuberances, kneaded, moulded, and wrinkled the cheeks. In him the physiognomist and the phrenologist mingled with the sculptor in rather excessive proportions, for he often exaggerated beyond the limits of possibility the organs of some faculty which he believed he had discovered in his model, or which really existed in it. His monumental busts are nevertheless superb pieces of work, and will

go down to posterity as final and accepted types of the celebrities they represent. It is difficult to imagine Goethe in any form other than that in which he is represented by David d'Angers.

The profiles which he moulded with swift and sure touch, with deep feeling for physiognomy, will form a complete collection of medals of the nineteenth century, for almost all the various classes of celebrities are represented in it by their leaders. This forms not the least interesting part of David d'Angers' work. His medals, in their accurate, delicate modelling, are not in the least worked out from the point of view of the ancients. The sculptor did not try to make his contemporaries into Syracusan medals, he takes them as they are, with their hair long or short, bristling or smooth, bald-headed, moustached, bewhiskered, with chins shaven, with coat, collar, and cravat if necessary, and in this respect he is thoroughly modern.

Few sculptors have shared as much in the intellectual movements of their day. Not that David d'Angers was a literary man, but he was full of ideas, and he thought it was the duty of the artist to represent them, or at least to have them reflected in his work. He therefore lived intimately with poets, and more

than one magnificent ode testifies to the noble exchanges of admiration which were so frequent in the heyday of Romanticism; his marble was often returned to him in the shape of verse no less solid and lasting. For my part, I believe that the marble of Paros and Corinth should express beauty first and foremost, and not a political or a philosophical idea, and I therefore regret the often useless trouble which David d'Angers took to make his art fit in with his system. Happily in his work the number of statues which he forgot to so fit in is large. "The Maiden by the Tomb of Marco Botzaris," writing with her finger in the dust the name of the illustrious dead, comes within the compass of pure art, in spite of the Philhellenic preoccupations of the time. The lovely body, in its chaste nudity, has all the gracefulness of a nymph, and a truthfulness and a *morbidezza* which transform the marble into flesh. "The Young Drummer Barra" has nothing left of his uniform save the drumstick which he still holds with the dying hand, and exhibits a delicate torso somewhat slender in form, as delicate and as pure as that of Hyacinth fallen under the blow dealt by Apollo. "The Child with the Bunch of Grapes," celebrated by Sainte-Beuve in ex-

quisite verse on an old rhythm of Ronsard's, is worthy of the rimes it has inspired. It is a piece of work worthy of antiquity. "Philopœmen drawing the Arrow from his Wound" represents, in spite of the Greek subject, a wholly modern body, but so carefully studied, so absolutely true, that one does not regret the purer and fuller forms which an Athenian sculptor would doubtless have given us. That excellent piece of work does the greatest honour to David, and counts among the best produced by artists in our day.

There was a grave question, not yet settled, which then excited studios and literary circles: Should contemporary celebrities be represented in their modern dress, or in a state of apotheosis and of ideal nudity as the sculptors of antiquity represented their contemporaries? The Romanticists, through a sort of reaction against pseudo-classicism, were in favour of the absolute reproduction of the costume. They wanted to have the Emperor wear his three-cornered hat and his gray riding-coat, and not the *pallium* of the Roman Cæsars. David d'Angers did not quite make up his mind one way or the other; although his liking for realism inclined him to accurate reproduction of costume, his sculptor's instinct drew him towards the nude,

without which there can be no real sculpture; so he represents Corneille in the costume of the day, somewhat modified and wearing a cloak, and on the other hand, Racine nude and wearing a Greek chlamyd the folds of which he brings back over his breast like an Athenian tragic poet. General Foy has a cloak only in the figure which crowns his monument, but he is dressed in the bas-relief which represents him amid his illustrious contemporaries.

This apparent contradiction can be explained. The bas-relief represents the man such as he was; in the statue he is transformed, deified to a certain extent, for it represents the man's genius. In his remarkable Pantheon pediment, David mingles allegorical and realistic figures; the former are nude or draped, the latter wear the costume of their day. The statue of Talma might be that of Roscius, but an actor has no proper costume and it is permissible to give to the tragedian of modern days the attitude and nudity of antiquity. Later, however, urged no doubt by literary reasons, David d'Angers resolutely gave to his statues of illustrious personages the costume of the time in which they lived, and being unable to exhibit his profound knowledge of anatomy under the

more or less eccentric forms of dress, he concentrated his whole talent on the heads and faces.

He added to the statue of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre a delightful group of Paul and Virginia asleep under a tropical plant, their childish arms interlaced. He carved superb Victories in the panels of the Triumphal Arch at Marseilles; great allegorical figures of robust and masterly port; he placed beautiful women by the Œil-de-bœuf of the Louvre; and every time that an opportunity occurred to place a Mourning Genius or a Weeping Virtue upon a tomb, he seized upon it. But in spite of the number of such examples, the most remarkable part of his work is the representation of illustrious men, the glorifying of human genius; Corneille, Racine, Goethe, Humboldt, Cuvier, Byron, Rossini, Alfred de Musset, are represented by statues, busts, or medals. I have merely mentioned a few names here and there; warriors and statesmen also have their place in this sculptured Pantheon which David d'Angers made of his own accord, often for marble or bronze, very often for nothing, moved by admiration, enthusiasm, or sympathy.

His last work was the statue of Arago lying in eternal rest on the marble of the tomb. He was faithful

to the mission of his whole life, which was to fix the features of the man of genius and to bestow upon him the longest eternity which art grants, that of sculpture. Thus it is that the name of David d'Angers is linked with the names of all the famous men who fill the first half of this century, and is inscribed upon their august images. This was his individual, his distinctive character.

Portraits of the Day

MADEMOISELLE FANNY ELSSLER

THE newspapers trouble themselves only about the talent and the art of actresses; their beauty is never analysed, they are never looked at from a purely plastic point of view. Occasionally, it is true, their gracefulness, their daintiness, is mentioned, but that is all.

Yet an actress is a statue or a picture which poses before you, and she may be criticised safely; she may be reproached with her ugliness, just as a painter would be reproached for violating the rules of drawing (the question of feeling pity for human defects is out of place here); her charms may be praised with the same indifference as a sculptor exhibits who, in the presence of a statue says, "That is a fine shoulder, or a well-turned arm."

No newspaper dwells on this important point, so that the reputation of pretty actresses is the work of chance, and usually is far from being deserved. Besides, many of these reputations for beauty have lasted

Fanny Elssler, in the rôle of Mathilde, in "The Pirates."

for more than a half-century, which is in truth too long.

Numberless heroic generals, charming functionaries of the Empire and no less delightful provincials, even thorough-bred Parisians, yet admire the traditional and mythological bloom of Mademoiselle Mars, the inimitable Célimène, a bloom which goes back to fabulous times. In general, handsome actresses are fairly ugly, — it is just to them to say so, — and if they did not have the stage for a pedestal, no one would pay any attention to them; they would be classed with ordinary women and with honest women who themselves have no other merit than that they are not men, as is easily seen when they abandon the dress of their sex to put on ours.

All this has no reference to Mademoiselle Fanny Elssler, who is in the flower of her youth and her beauty, and has the advantage of not having been admired by our grandfathers. She is tall, supple, and well built; she has slender wrists and well-turned ankles. Her legs, shapely and clean, recall the vigorous slenderness of the legs of Diana, the virgin huntress; the kneecap is fair, and stands out well, — the whole knee is irreproachable. Her legs differ greatly

from those of most dancers, whose whole body seems to have settled down within the stockings; they are not legs like those of a parish beadle or a knave of clubs, which excite the enthusiasm of Anacreontic old men in the orchestra stalls and make them polish carefully the lenses of their glasses, but two beautiful legs of antique statues, worthy to be moulded and lovingly studied. I hope I may be forgiven for talking so much about legs, but I am writing about a dancer.

Here is another point worthy of praise: Mademoiselle Elssler has rounded, well-turned arms; the bones do not show at the elbow; they resemble in no way the wretched arms of her companions, the dreadful leanness of which makes them look like lobsters' claws.

Her figure is pretty well rounded, and — which is rare among dancers, to whom the double hills and the snowy mounts so often sung by schoolboys and song writers appear to be totally unknown — one does not see moving on her back those two bony squares which look like the roots of wings which have been torn out.

As for the shape of her head, I confess it does not appear to me as graceful as people describe it. Mademoiselle Elssler has beautiful hair which falls on either side of her temples, shining and lustrous like a bird's

wing. The dark colour of her hair shows somewhat too Southern against the distinctively German character of her face. That sort of hair does not properly belong to such a head and such a body. This peculiarity troubles the eye and disturbs the harmony of the whole. Her eyes, very dark, which look like two little jet stars upon a crystal sky, are entirely different from the nose, which is wholly German as well as the brow. Mademoiselle Elssler has been called a Spaniard of the North, and this was intended as a compliment. It is her defect. She is German by her smile, the whiteness of her skin, the outline of her face, the placidity of her brow; she is Spanish by her hair, her small feet, her slender, delicate hands, the somewhat bold turn of her waist. Two different natures and two different temperaments struggle in her; her beauty would be improved if one of the types prevailed. She is pretty, but she lacks distinctive racial traits; she is neither quite Spanish nor quite German, and the same indecision is to be noticed in her sexual characteristics. Her hips are not much developed, her bosom does not exceed that of the Hermaphrodite of antiquity; just as she is a very charming woman, she would be the loveliest boy possible.

I shall finish this portrait with a little advice. Mademoiselle Elssler's smile does not show often enough. Sometimes it is forced and strained; it shows the gums too much. In certain attitudes, when she bends, the lines of her face do not show properly, the eyebrows become thin, the corners of the mouth are turned up, and the nose looks pointed, which gives her face a disagreeable expression of sly malice. Mademoiselle Elssler should also dress her hair lower; if she did so, she would break the line of the shoulders and neck, which is too square. I also advise her to dye the ends of her pretty, slender fingers a less brilliant rose. It is a needless addition.

MADEMOISELLE GEORGES

MADEMOISELLE GEORGES has been beautiful for a very long time, and one might say of her what the peasant said of Aristides, "I banish you because I am tired of hearing you called just." I shall not do like that worthy Greek individual, although evidently it is more difficult to be always beautiful than to be always just; but Mademoiselle Georges seems to have solved that important problem. Years pass over her marble face without in the least modifying the purity of her profile, that of a Greek Melpomene. Her state of preservation is far more miraculous than that of Mademoiselle Mars, who is not in the slightest degree well preserved, and who can cause any illusion in her lovers' parts only to army contractors of the time of the Republic and to generals of the Empire.

But in spite of the excessive number of lustres which she counts, Mademoiselle Georges is really beautiful, and very beautiful. She is so like a Syra-

cusan medal or an Isis on an Eginetic bas-relief that one might well mistake her for them. The rich eyebrows, drawn with incomparable purity and delicacy, stretch over the black eyes full of fire and tragic flashes; the nose, thin and straight, cut by a finely dilated nostril, runs into the brow by a line magnificent in its simplicity; the mouth is strong, arched at the corners, splendidly disdainful like that of an avenging Nemesis which awaits the moment of letting slip her brazen-clawed lion. Yet her mouth has the loveliest smile, which blooms with imperial grace, and one would never dream, when she expresses tender passions, that she has just hurled an antique imprecation or a modern anathema.

Her chin, which exhibits strength and resolution, is firmly turned, and ends that majestic contour of her profile, which is more that of a goddess than of a woman.

Like all the beautiful women of the Pagan cycle, Mademoiselle Georges has a full, broad brow, swelling somewhat at the temples, but not very lofty, very similar to that of the Venus of Milo; a brow full of will, voluptuousness, and power, which suits equally Clytemnestra and Messalina.

A remarkable peculiarity of Mademoiselle Georges'

neck is that instead of rounding inward from the side of the shoulders, it forms a full contour which unites the shoulders and the back of the head without any sinuosity, a mark of the athletic temperament which is shown in the highest degree in the Farnese Hercules. The upper part of the arm is almost formidable through the strength of the muscles and the vigour of the contour. One of her bracelets would make a girdle for a woman of ordinary size, but her arms are very white, beautifully shaped, and end in a wrist childlike in its delicacy and in its slenderness, and pretty hands dimpled all over, regular royal hands made to bear the sceptre and to clutch the handle of a dagger of Æschylus or Euripides.

Mademoiselle Georges seems to belong to a mighty vanished race. She amazes as much as she charms; she seems a Titan woman, a Cybele, mother of gods and of men, with her crown of crenelated towers. Her build has something cyclopæan and pelasgic; one feels on seeing her that she remains standing like a granite column, a witness to a bygone generation, and that she is the last representative of the epic and superhuman type. She is an admirable statue, fit to be placed upon the tomb of tragedy buried forever.

Portraits of the Day

MADEMOISELLE SUZANNE BROHAN

UNTIL now I have reviewed only a certain number of figures of more or less beautiful actresses, more or less suave and harmonious in their contours; I have been preoccupied with the line rather than with the expression; I have endeavoured to draw in ink, so to speak, each of the beautiful flowers of our day. In this gallery of lovely actresses all have a proud look and a bold brow; they walk like Venus or Aspasia; they have the same assured feeling of triumph in their port, the same grace, the same smile. They recall the "Procession of the Hours," in which all the figures are beautiful, and in which each goddess wafts her own perfume through the air.

I have enjoyed describing all these figures; in some the pure severity of a Greek profile, in others the lively and charming ways of a Watteau shepherdess. Now I shall open the gallery of clever actresses.

They cannot complain of my having given precedence to those flowers of a day, of which the wind breaks the stalk; it is to be feared that they will know neither old age nor duration.

I do not mean, however, that all clever actresses are not beautiful; only, there are some among them in whom talent makes one forget even the beauty of the person, just as the main motive of a symphony casts in the shade all its other merits. I know no more absolute tyrant than talent. See for yourself. Here, even in society, there are charming women who might justly be thought pretty, even by the side of the prettiest; they have a bright smile, white teeth, abundance of hair, a lovely complexion, but they have also, unfortunately, wit, and the pitiless generosity of heaven has poured out so many gifts upon them that ugly women, in order to console themselves for that fact, seem to forget every moment that these society rivals are pretty; they merely say, "How clever they are!" and when they say that, it is to avenge themselves.

Cleverness is a book which very few people are capable of writing or of understanding. There is more wit in a single gesture of a woman, in a single

shade of her dress, in a single inflection of her voice, than in all "Candide." Add to this that wit is vanishing and becomes rarer every day on the stage as in society.

Who will restore to us those divine models of wit of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Montesson? What patient analyst will take pains to explain to us how, little by little, wit, that gem so rarely met with among our actresses, passed through an admirable exchange of grace and urbanity from the drawing-room of the court lady to the stage?

Of the different kinds of wit which an actress may possess, the rarest is unquestionably society wit, yet it is that very form which, in spite of prejudice, reconciled the French society which has just come to an end to the simplicity of Gaussin, the repartees of Sophie Arnould, and the daring of Mademoiselle Mars. These ladies had won the right to say anything they pleased by dint of cleverness; they had enough and to spare for all those small memoirs of the eighteenth century, so conceited and impudent. The Cydalises of that day did not rely upon a stock of witticisms borrowed here and there, from the stage

or the *foyer*; they had their own genuine wit. The actresses of that day were in accord with the upper ten; the two powers mutually aided each other.

To-day where is the actress clever enough to venture, off the stage, upon that dangerous ground of wit, to maintain herself on it, and to triumph over others? What woman is always so much mistress of herself as to keep close watch on herself and never to exaggerate? Besides, when a woman is young and beautiful, she is not likely to have recourse to wit when she can so easily appeal to her charms. There are certain sacrifices which are quite inexplicable. Just as young, lovely women of the Court of the Great King, their hair still adorned with pearls, still scented with the roses of Versailles and the perfumed love-knots of scores of lovers, betook themselves fearfully to the solitude of the cloister, so there are also actresses whose wavering courage leads them to take refuge in wit as a means of defence; it then becomes a weapon with which they guard themselves from slander and the mean jealousies of the green-room; it becomes the fan with which they slap the face of fools. Mademoiselle de l'Étoile in the "Roman comique" uses her busk in that way when she wants to punish Ragotin.

It is not my part to seek to explain the motives which cause a pretty actress to take to wit for the rest of her days, as formerly women took to religion; such a resolve can only be the result of great personal merit, and besides, to aspire to reign supreme as a wit is a very fine ambition. This position, unoccupied at the Comédie Française since Mademoiselle Contat, is sought for at present by not more than three or four serious claimants. At their head must be placed Mademoiselle Brohan.

All that I have said about wit applies thoroughly to the nature of that actress, the charming Mademoiselle Brohan, who is to be seen walking so seriously along the street and towards the green-room of her theatre, and who will be seen presently on the stage sparkling with wit, humour, and charm. Every word of hers will tell, every repartee will be piquant, she breathes the very spirit of Marivaux's comedy, she flashes and sparkles as it does. On the stage Mademoiselle Brohan has the effect of champagne; one has not time to see the defects in the work, so completely is one dazzled and carried away. The mobility of her features adds wonderful power to her irony or her passion; as swift as the

bee, she stings before we have thought of warding off the stroke.

But go to the green-room after such an amusing evening, and you find there the most amiable woman of the world, who receives you with the air of a high-bred lady, with the reserve, the wit, the delicacy, and the dignity of manners which no actress, not even Mademoiselle Mars, possesses off the stage. Graceful and fine as one of Petitot's enamels, Mademoiselle Brohan's face could very well do without wit, but she has been quite right to turn to it, even as a matter of policy, for wit best adorns beauty.

MADAME DORVAL

BORN IN 1801 — DIED IN 1849

PEOPLE who never enter theatres are thoroughly convinced that authors and actors of the drama properly so called have almost invariably a long face, a sombre look, and a Catalan dagger concealed about their person. These worthy people would be shocked if they saw traces of gaiety on the face of Alexandre Dumas, of Bocage, of Victor Hugo, or of Frédérick Lemaître; they are quite sure that Dumas killed a number of sailors on his trip to Sicily, that Bocage goes every morning to weep in the Vaugirard Cemetery, that Victor Hugo inhabits a cavern not far from Paris, and that Frédérick Lemaître has tried time and again to commit suicide under the windows of a Russian princess.

The witty and joyous dash characteristic of Dumas' conversation, the quiet and paternal gait of Victor Hugo, Bocage and Frédérick Lemaître in their blue coats playing billiards near the Ambigu, would fill them

with amazement. Now you can easily imagine what that sort of people think of actresses who perform in dramas.

At the head of these is naturally Madame Dorval. She appears to them in the light of a veritable victim; to them her soft, veiled look is full of soulfulness and elegiac sadness. "I am sure," said a mirror-maker to his neighbour, "that that woman weeps eight hours a day. I am told that she has her room hung with black velvet. She goes to church," etc., etc.

It is thus that the ingenious mirror-maker judges that great actress, because he has seen her in the part of Adèle in "Antony," in "The Gamester's Wife," in "Charlotte Corday," and especially in Marguerite in Goethe's "Faust"; parts which Madame Dorval has marked with all her genius for suffering and resigned love. Happily the *bourgeois* and the mirror-maker — I hope so, at least, for the sake of newspaper men — write neither biographies nor notices.

Madame Dorval is one of those privileged natures which necessarily are not understood of the vulgar; she scarce shows her true self save to her circle of intimate friends and to the authors who usually write for her. Adèle in "Antony," whose smile is so sad

and tearful, displays in her own home all the treasures of her naturally bright and joyous disposition. The real characteristic of Madame Dorval's temperament is genuine, open gaiety, as bright and fresh as the song of the bird in the cornfield. She is obliging and sets you at once at your ease, whoever you may be, which is the peculiarity of those genuinely rich in talent, noble hearts which hold out their hand to the poorest. Madame Dorval's conversation is never fed with the wearisome commonplaces which Voisenon calls "good friends which never fail you at need"; on the contrary she willingly indulges, in the maddest possible way, in absurdities and paradoxes, enlivening everything, quizzing everything, imprudently expending herself in a thousand ways, and not understanding the art of saving.

Never seeking an effect, never pretending to utter witticisms, Madame Dorval does so nevertheless with certainty; all her rashest witticisms are fortunate. The peculiar mark of her wit is candour, it is like the bouquet of the rarest wines. The most remarkable thing about Madame Dorval is that she could assuredly turn that wit to some other account. I have no hesitation in saying that if she cared to write a

book, even though she did not put her name to it, the book would be read.

I have an album in which Madame Dorval has copied a few thoughts and maxims drawn from writers of various countries. It is a perfect Babel. The names of Schiller, Victor Hugo, Jesus Christ, Mahomet, Sainte-Beuve, and many others are met with there. These varied extracts are the result of her reading, but the choice of them marks indescribable fancifulness and humour. The reading of the book, written from beginning to end by herself, makes you feel as if you were following out one of Jordaens' wonderful Bacchanals; thoughts alternate with stories, poetry with prose; you come upon sums in arithmetic and astronomical predictions, all whirling in a fantastic spiral, breaking out into so many flashes, which seem to light up the road travelled by Madame Dorval.

I have often been asked by people in the provinces less stupid than the mirror-maker I have spoken of, "Is Madame Dorval witty?" My reply to these people, whom I could not decently present to the charming actress, was, "Have you seen her in 'Jeanne Vaubernier' by Balissan de Rougemont?" For that part is one of the best proofs of Madame Dorval's

wit; she plays it like an actress who puts irony and telling effects into every fold of her fan. M. Balissan de Rougemont must not get conceited because I say this, for it is entirely in spite of him that Madame Dorval has displayed such cleverness in that common-place story. Actresses sometimes play pleasant tricks to poor authors, — a trick like this one is a noble vengeance.

In order that this article may not fail to reassure people who insist on believing that Madame Dorval inhabits a sepulchre, I am glad to tell them that her drawing-room looks like an annex to that of Marion Delorme. It is furnished with all the comfort and elegance of the day: albums, paintings, statues, a piano, flowers, embroidery, and porcelains. I have not seen in it a single black veil nor any Borgia poison, no Toledo blade and no stiletto. People drink tea, sit on comfortable sofas, talk with clever people and allow themselves to laugh at certain actresses — and you rarely meet any actors there.

MADEMOISELLE RACHEL

BORN IN 1820 — DIED IN 1858

I HAVE no intention of writing a biography of Mademoiselle Rachel. The vulgar curiosity which hungers after insignificant details disgusts me more than I can express. But I may, I believe, without lacking in propriety, indicate a few features of the general appearance of the illustrious tragedian whose name may almost be replaced by this periphrasis.

Mademoiselle Rachel, though devoid of plastic knowledge or taste, possessed an instinctive and deep feeling for statuary. Her poses, her attitudes, her gestures were naturally statuesque and formed a series of *bassi-relievi*; the draperies fell on her tall, elegant, supple body in folds that might have been made by the hand of Phidias; no modern movement broke the harmony and the rhythm of her walk; she was born an antique, and her pale flesh seemed made of Greek marble. Her beauty, unrecognised, — she was an admirably beautiful woman, — had nothing coquettish,

or pretty, nothing French, in a word. Indeed, for a long time she was considered ugly, while artists were lovingly studying and reproducing as a type of perfection her face with its black eyes, which was the very image of the face of Melpomene. Her brow was meant for the golden circlet or white band, her glance was deep and fatal, her face was an exquisite, long oval, her lips were disdainfully drawn up at the ends, her neck was superbly joined to her shoulders. When she appeared, in spite of the arm-chairs, and the Corinthian colonnades supporting a vault with rose ornaments, while the age was that of heroic Greece, in spite of too frequent anachronisms in the language, she at once carried you back to the purest antiquity. It was the Phædra of Euripides, not that of Racine, which you beheld. She turned herself swiftly, with a few easy, bold, simple touches comparable to those of the painters of Greek vases, into a long, draped figure with few ornaments, graceful in its austerity and archaic in its charm, which it was impossible thereafter to forget. I would in no wise take aught from her glory, but in this lay the originality of her talent. Mademoiselle Rachel was rather a tragic mime than a tragedian in the ordinary sense of the word. Her success, which

was so great with us, would have been greater still on the theatre of Bacchus at Athens if the Greeks had allowed women to wear the cothurn. Not that she gesticulated, for on the contrary motionlessness was one of her most telling means of impressing her audiences, but she realised in her appearance all the ideal queens, heroines, and victims of antiquity which the spectator could imagine. By a simple fold of her cloak she often told more than the author in a long tirade, and with a single gesture she called back to the fabulous and mythological times Tragedy, which was forgetting itself in Versailles.

She alone maintained alive for eighteen years a dead form, not by renewing it, as might be supposed, but by making it antique instead of old-fashioned, which perchance it had become. Her grave, deep, vibrating voice, so seldom rising loud or breaking into cries, well suited her self-contained, sovereignly calm acting. Never did any one have less recourse to the epileptic contorsions, to the convulsive or hoarse cries of the melodrama, or of the drama, if you prefer that. Indeed, she was occasionally accused of lacking feeling, a most idiotic reproach. Mademoiselle Rachel was cold like antiquity, which considered the exaggerated mani-

festations of grief indecent, and scarcely allowed Laocoon to writhe as the serpent wound around him, and Niobe to crouch under the arrows of Apollo and Diana. The heroic world was calm, robust, and manly; it would have feared to tarnish its beauty by grimaces; and besides, our nervous suffering, our puerile despair, our sentimental excitement would have made no impression upon those marble natures, on those sculptural personalities which Fate alone could break after a long struggle. The tragic heroes were almost the equals of the gods from whom they were often descended, and they rebelled against Fate rather than whimpered. So Mademoiselle Rachel was right not to use the tearful voice, and not to speak the alexandrine verse tremulously and haltingly as modern sensitive players do. Hatred, wrath, vengeance, revolt against Fate, passion terrible and fierce, love with its implacable fury, murderous irony, haughty despair, fatal madness, these are the sentiments which tragedy can and must express; but it must express them like marble *bassi-relievi* on the walls of a palace or a temple, without breaking the lines of the sculpture, and constantly preserving the eternal serenity of art.

No actress has rendered so well as Mademoiselle

Rachel the synthetic expression of human passion incarnated in tragedy under the figure of gods, heroes, kings, princes, and princesses, as if it were intended to remove them farther from vulgar reality and mean, prosaic details. She was simple, beautiful, grand, and virile like Greek art, which she represented in French tragedy.

Dramatic authors, on seeing the immense success of her performances, often longed to secure her as the interpreter of their works. If she occasionally yielded to such requests, it was, I may affirm it, only regretfully and after much hesitation. Although she was reproached with doing nothing for the art of our day, her tact, so deep and so sure, made her feel that she was not a modern, and that if she played the parts offered to her on all sides she would destroy the pure and antique lines of her talent. She preserved her life long her statuesque attitude and her marble whiteness. The few plays outside of her old repertoire in which she performed are not to be taken into account, for she abandoned them as speedily as she could. So she had no influence upon our contemporary art, but on the other hand, she was not influenced by it. She stands apart, isolated on her pedestal in the midst of

the thymele; around it the choruses and semi-choruses of tragedy ever weave in and out according to the ancient rhythm. There she may be left, as the most suitable funeral figure upon the tomb of Tragedy.

We have said that Mademoiselle Rachel had no influence whatever on contemporary literature, but that is too strong a statement. She certainly did not take any part in it, but by resuscitating our old-time tragedy, she checked the great Romanticist movement which might perhaps have given to France a new dramatic form; she drove to inferior stages more than one discouraged talent; but on the other hand by her beauty and her genius she made the ideal of antiquity live again, and made us dream of an art greater than that of which she was the interpreter.

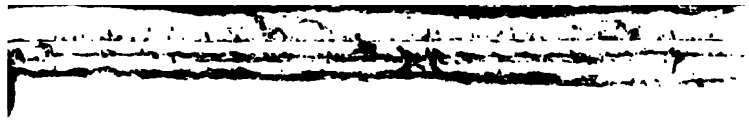
In private life Mademoiselle Rachel did not, like so many actresses, destroy the illusion she had produced on the stage; on the contrary, she preserved all her prestige. No one was more simply a great lady. The statue had no difficulty in turning into a duchess, and she wore the long cashmere just as she wore the purple mantle with its golden palms. Her small hands, scarce large enough to hold the dagger of tragedy, handled a fan like a queen. When one

saw her close, the delicate details of her charming face were seen in her cameo-like profile within the corolla of the bonnet, as they lighted up with a witty smile. She never posed, she was never tense, she often exhibited a playfulness unexpected on the part of a tragic queen. Many a clever remark, many an ingenious repartee, many a witty saying has fallen from those beautiful lips shaped like Cupid's bow and now mute forever.

An actor's fate, after all, is very sad; he cannot say, like the poet, *non omnis moriar;* his past work does not remain, and all his glory goes down into the grave with him. His name alone is repeated for a time by men. Among the present generation, who is there that has a very clear idea of Talma, Malibran, Mademoiselle Mars, Madame Dorval? What young man is there who does not smile at the amazing tales told by some old amateur still passionately fond of his remembrances; and who does not prefer *in petto* some blooming, living mediocrity performing in an ephemeral work of the day under the glare of the footlights?

So let us not, we patient sculptors of that hard marble called verse, envy, in our wretchedness and

solitude, the noise, the applause, the praise, the crowns, the showers of gold and flowers, the carriages with the horses taken out, the torchlight serenades, or even after death the immense processions which seem to have gathered together the inhabitants of a state. Poor beautiful actresses! poor great queens! Forgetfulness covers them completely, and the curtain of their last performance, as it falls, conceals them forever. Oh, vanished perfumes! Oh, songs long stilled! Oh, passing images! Glory knows that they will not live, and gives them forthwith the favours which it makes immortal poets wait for so long.



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